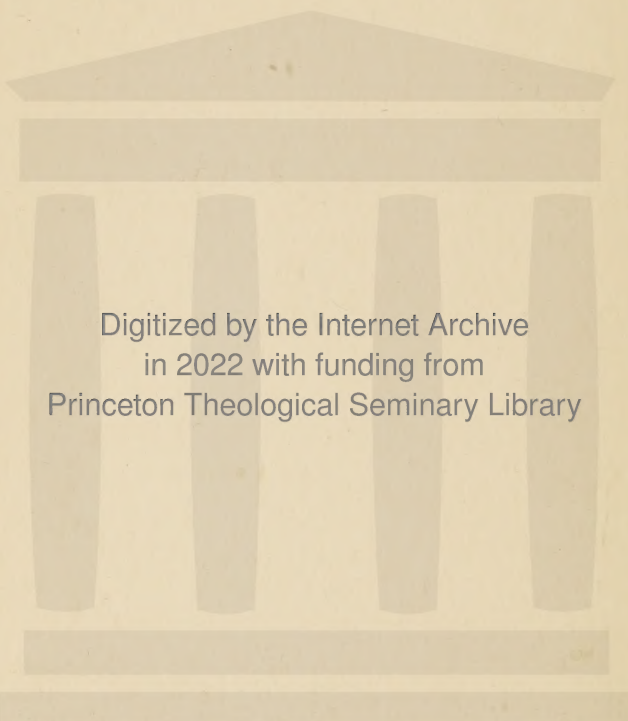


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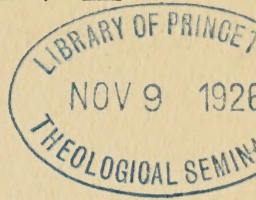
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WHY I BELIEVE IN JESUS

A Personal Experience



By

EDWARD LEIGH PELL

*Author of "What Did Jesus Really Teach
About Prayer," etc.*



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*An Attempt to Make
Plain and Real the
Jesus of the Gospels
and of Experience.*

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.”

EPHESIANS 3:17-19.

FOREWORD

IN this book I have tried to reproduce a series of lectures or addresses which I am now giving in American cities and towns on *Why I Believe in Jesus: A Personal Experience*, omitting some things which could not be effectively presented in print, and adding some things which could not be effectively presented to an audience under the limitations of a popular address.

In rearranging the matter in chapters for the convenience of the reader, I have found it necessary to change the order of treatment, and this has required much re-writing; but I hope that those who have heard the lectures as I have given them from the platform or pulpit, will find that the message itself remains unchanged.

E. L. P.

Richmond, Virginia.

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IF WE WOULD REALLY BELIEVE

“How is it that you have managed to hold on to your faith through all the staggering developments and wearing strain of our trying time?”

“Do you remember the answer which Phillips Brooks gave to the young man who wanted to know whether a vital union with Christ is essential to Christianity? ‘Son,’ said the bishop, ‘vital union with Christ is Christianity!’ ”

“You mean that it is because you have been a Christian in that sense that you have managed to go on your way undisturbed? But that means that you have preserved your sense of the reality of the divine Christ, and that’s my trouble. Our present civilization is a blinding whirlpool that is utterly destructive of one’s sense of the reality of spirit, and I have lost my sense of the divine Christ in Jesus. What can I do?”

“Pull yourself out of the whirlpool, and let us seek a quiet spot where we can think this matter over together.”

I

EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF JESUS

I

I DID not get my first impressions of Jesus from a man's Bible. I got them from a little child's Bible—my mother's face. My little mother was saturated through and through with the mind and spirit of Jesus, and it must have been at a very tender age that I caught my first glimpse of Him in her beautiful eyes; that I first heard Him in her gentle voice; that I first felt Him in her tender touch.

It is impossible at this distance to distinguish with certainty between the things I have imagined about my childhood and the actual experiences of those early days; but at this moment it seems to me that my first impression of Jesus was of one who was in some way intimately associated with my mother, that His heart was like her heart, that He was in some sense the secret of all that made her so beautiful and precious to me—that her love was a part of His love, her gentleness a part of His gentleness, her patience a part of His patience. A part of this picture may have developed in later years, but I am sure that, from the beginning,

Jesus and the things that made my mother beautiful were somehow bound up together. He was the Good One and my mother was good, and they loved each other. When I began to hear of bad people I distinguished them as people who did not love Jesus like my mother, and who were bad because they didn't.

Then there was the Quiet Lady across the street. She was a Quaker, whose life, by reason of an unfortunate marriage, was full of trouble; but something held her, and her sweet face was as calm as the silvery moon that used to look down upon me through my window at night. She was an ineffably beautiful spirit like my mother, who loved the same Jesus my mother loved, and she had a habit of going to her room every morning when her housework was over, and locking the door and spending an hour with that same Jesus. She did not tell me it was Jesus, but she always carried her Bible with her and I understood. I must have understood for I never dared to peek through the keyhole. And always when she came out she looked as if she had seen Him. Doubtless it was what I saw of Him in her that enlarged my view of Jesus, from one who was associated with my mother, to One who loved everybody and who made everybody good that loved Him.

As I grew older I came in contact with other beautiful spirits whose faces and lives confirmed these first impressions, and in some cases no doubt added something to them.

And then came, in my university days, a man who, to my mind, was one of the most Christlike spirits I have ever known. He was so thoroughly saturated with the mind and spirit of Jesus that one could hardly look at him without thinking of Jesus. He was known in the classroom as our professor of English Literature, but on the campus as the boys' friend; and when a boy's badness got him into trouble, going to "Old Mang," as he was affectionately called, was like going to God. But a very friendly, fatherly God. He was the only argument for religion we had on the campus that every boy could understand. Sometimes a sophomore would come to me to make fun of religion, and he would say: "Look at Old Blank. He has a head as big as a barrel, and he doesn't see anything in your religious stuff." And I would stand before him as helpless as a dummy—until I thought of "Old Mang." And then it would occur to me that there was not a boy on the campus who, if he got into trouble, could be persuaded to go to "Old Blank," and not one who would hesitate to go to "Old Mang." Even a sophomore could understand that argument. And sometimes I could go further. I could say, mentally if not vocally:

"John, religion has made 'Old Mang' what he is. No religion has made you what you are. Which has done the better job?"

"'Old Mang' has enough moral courage to face the world, the flesh and the devil for God and

right and truth and humanity. How much have you?

“ ‘Old Mang,’ brought up from childhood in comradeship with the immaculate Christ, has been all his life as pure as his own mother. How pure are you? ”

These, and similar recollections of early impressions, leave me no room to doubt that I first began to believe in Jesus because of what I saw of Him in the faces and lives of those in whom He lived. And this is one of the reasons I have for believing in Him to-day. All through my life I have been looking for Him in the lives of others, and in this quest I have seen things which have helped to hold me to my faith when almost everything else seemed to fail. I have seen His mind and spirit come into the minds and spirits of men in ways which could not be accounted for on natural grounds. I have seen Him perform miracles upon the souls of men that were far more wonderful than anything He ever did for the bodies of men when he was here in the flesh. I have seen Him pick up poor wrecks of humanity—pick them up out of the ditch, wash them off, break the chains of sin that bound them, quicken their spirits, open their eyes, start them off to live the life of the spirit, and by daily comradeship with them help them on up toward the heights of the kingdom of God, developing them day after day until they stood before God, His full-grown sons, the image of Christ in their faces.

How I wish you could see the faces that are passing before my mind's eye at this moment! Yonder is an editor of a daily paper. A few years ago that man was a mere make-believe of a man. He did not count at all. To-day he is the greatest moral force in his community—a man with more spiritual power than a thousand ordinary men.

There goes a girl who started in life without a chance. Jesus came into her life and gave her a chance. She is a perfectly normal, happy-hearted girl; loves boyish sports; plays baseball with an enthusiasm that fairly takes your breath. But you may call that girl from her game to-day and offer her the hardest job for Christ a girl was ever given to do, and she will spring to it as zealously and with as much enthusiasm as she would spring to her baseball.

Here comes an old man—a physician. That man has given his life so unreservedly to the service of Christ among the poor, that after fifty years of heavy practice he is still compelled to live in a rented house. No, that is a mistake; he has passed away and he no longer needs a shelter. But I can see him still; and I can see a vast throng of men and women who, if he should pass by, could barely refrain from kissing his shadow on the pavement. You can hardly mention his name among the poor without bringing tears of gratitude and love to their eyes.

Yonder is a girl, one of the most beautiful

spirits I have ever known. She is the only child of worshipping parents; she is beautiful; she has all the money a girl could want; and yet such is her devotion to Christ that I verily believe she could lay her little body down upon the cross and stretch out her hands to receive the nails for Him.

Just over there is the face of a man who for many years was an employer of thousands of working men. That man went among his employees as Jesus would have gone; entered into their lives, not only with a boundless sympathy, but with a brotherly appreciation of them; stood by them; stood up for them; continued faithful to them unto the end. The end came a year or two ago; and, to-day, if you should mention his name in an audience of working men anywhere in the state in which he lived, a great silence would fall upon them like the silence of men who in a luminous moment of life have become conscious of God.

Yonder go two women. One of them is a high-born girl of one of the finest families in the land. The other was for twenty years a poor woman of the streets. That high-born girl went down into the slums and picked her up and brought her to Christ. And then she stood by her, and through her comradeship and care that poor woman came to be, next to that girl, the greatest power for Christ in the community.

Has everything gone wrong? Is there a cloud over the sun? Have you lost your grip? Has

God become a mere shadow? Do you feel as if the very foundations of life have given way beneath your feet? Is your spirit so desolate that you cannot read your Bible, cannot pray, cannot interest yourself in any service for Christ or humanity? Do you feel as if you were almost ready to doubt your own existence? Put on your hat and go out and look for Him in the faces and lives of people in whom he lives. If you could see the faces that are passing before me now you would see the handiwork of One who is beyond human; you would see a life which you could not account for on natural grounds. You would see a spirit which could not have come from anyone but Him. And you would go back to your work saying in your heart:

“Doubt Him? How can I doubt Him? I have seen Him.”

II

But I must be frank. While I have what I believe to be the best of reasons for believing in Jesus, I am not sure that any one of them, or all of them together, would count for much with me to-day if I knew no more about Him or about life and the life of the spirit which we call religion than I knew in those early days when I was able to believe in Him simply because of what I saw of Him in the lives of others. For in spite of my early Christian training I was hardly out of sight of my mother's home before I began to look at life

from the world's everyday point of view—a point from which it is practically impossible to see anything that is of the spirit with sufficient clearness to be sure of its existence. I did not call myself a materialist—I had a horror of materialism. And the spiritual ideals my mother gave me were still lingering about my head like beautiful butterflies trying to entice me to follow them. But even while I was conscious of them I began to absorb from my environment the popular view, that while the spiritual side of life was beautiful and quite important for the brief poetic or emotional periods of life—for childhood and protracted illness and the dark nights of bereavement and the hour of death,—in everyday life it was matter, not spirit, that counted, and one must plan one's life in the main from that point of view. If I had continued to look at life from that point of view—the point from which we see the material side of life as a mountain and the spiritual side as a molehill—I should to-day be able to believe in the human Jesus, but so far as I can now see I should have no grounds whatever for a real faith in the divine Christ in Jesus. Fortunately for me something happened.

One day—it was a strangely warm day in November—I stood at my window feasting my eyes upon a beautiful tree nearby that was all covered with a glory of golden autumn leaves. Suddenly a shadow came over the sky, and turning my eyes, I saw that a great storm-cloud had come

out of the West and now seemed to be making its way like a terrible monster directly toward my tree. There was a moment of ominous silence and then the monster blew a frightful blast which struck my tree, shook it, tore it, stripped it of all its golden glory, and left it as bare and poor and ugly as a skeleton.

I turned away with a shudder, and soon afterwards, something like that happened to me. A wild storm of life suddenly swept down upon me, gave me a staggering blow, shook me, tore me, stripped me of all the little golden glory I had gathered about me, and then picked me up and tossed me against the thin partition that separates this life from the unseen. And there it left me, as bare and empty-handed as a babe newly-born. And there I lay hovering between life and death and too weak to think of either.

One day I opened my eyes, and there came to me what I have come to believe to be the most wonderful experience that ever comes to a human being next to his discovery of God. The tragedy that had overtaken me had swept out of my way all the material interests which blind men to the truth, and for the first time in my life I looked out upon life with an unobstructed vision. I saw things as they were. I could distinguish mountains from molehills, substance from shadow, gold from tinsel. I could see how small were the transient things that had appeared so great and how great were the eternal things that had appeared

so small. And everything was turned round. For years the material side of life had been practically everything and the spiritual side only incidental; now I saw that the spiritual side was everything and the material side only incidental. And with this new view of life came a new view of God, a new view of His truth, a new view of my Bible. Everything was different. And when I looked upon Jesus the divine Christ in Him was as real as my own mother. Everything about Him that had seemed strange now appeared natural. Many things in His teachings, which had always appeared unreasonable or impracticable, now appeared to me as the teachings of the highest wisdom. Everything about him had become so natural that believing in him seemed the most natural thing in the world.

From that day I have never lost a moment's sleep over the religious difficulties which are giving trouble to so many thoughtful people of our day. I have not ignored them, but they have ceased to frighten me. When a man reaches the point from which the spiritual side of life is everything and the material side is only incidental, there is nothing in sight to frighten him.

It did not occur to me at the time just what had happened to me. Not until several years afterwards did the truth dawn upon me that, when the blinding materialities of life were swept from before my eyes, I was almost where Jesus had placed Himself when He came into the world.

That is, so far as my point of view was concerned. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean that I was given the vision of the Son of Man who had not where to lay His head. I only mean that I had come to the point of view to which all men come when they take their stand irrevocably with Him. I was where I could see things, not with His eyes, but from His point of view, and so far as my vision extended I could see that what He had taught was true.

III

And yet I am not sure that even this discovery would have made my reasons for believing in Him sufficiently strong for the trials of faith which we are passing through to-day. There are times when we need something more than an appeal to reason or even to our spiritual vision—times when nothing is strong enough to steady our faith unless it is accompanied by an appeal to our hearts. Convinced as I am of the sufficiency of the reasons I have for believing in Jesus, I am not sure that I would believe in Him to-day if I had not discovered a truth that appeals to my heart—if I had not discovered that He believes in me.

The faith which Jesus had in humanity is one of the greatest marvels of history. When He came into the world humanity was a drug on the market. In my boyhood there were times when watermelons were so plentiful that a farmer, after

trying all through the day to dispose of his stock, would offer his entire wagon-load for a dollar bill. That is what we mean by a drug on the market. It was difficult to dispose of human beings at any price. People went to war, not for the men they could catch, but for land and fine robes and blazing jewels. They got so many prisoners that when they came back they would dump them into the slave-market to be sold for anything they might bring. If there were a poet among them, or a sculptor, or a philosopher, or a prophet, they would sell him for a sum that would not be sufficient to-day to buy a hat that a self-respecting woman would wear. Their only value lay in what could be got out of them at once. Nobody seemed to think anything of what a man might become. Nobody had any faith in human possibilities.

What a strange Being this was who came to tell people that they were worth while; who assured them that they were not animals (“How much better is a man than a sheep?”); that they were immortal spirits; that God was their Father; that they had a divine destiny; that the Father thought enough of them to send His Son to save them; that the Son thought enough of them to devote His life to them and then lay down His life for them. No wonder they looked at one another with amazement and exclaimed, “Never man spake like this man.” Note how sane He was in His attitude toward them. He

had no illusions about humanity. He did not believe that humanity was incurably good. He knew it was not incurably good. He was not impressed with people's achievements, or with the way they lived or with the state of their hearts. Yet He believed in them. He believed in their possibilities. In other words, He believed in men as a mother believes in her poor little freckled-faced, snub-nosed, knock-kneed boy.

“They said he would never amount to much,
But his mother said he would.”

Mother has no illusions about her boy. People say that love is blind, but it is not; only romance is blind. Mother believes in her boy, not because she is blind, but because love has opened her eyes to see what others fail to see. Others see the boy's achievements or his failure to achieve; Mother sees his possibilities. She knows that her boy is freckle-faced and snub-nosed and knock-kneed, but she looks down beneath all these surface-uglinesses, deep down to his tiny, undeveloped spirit, and catches a vision of the Divine Finger touching it. She sees it starting into life, sees it growing on up, up, up, and looking up, herself, into the invisible she sees the child of her faith standing upon the heights of the Kingdom of God, a full-grown son of God, the Master's image in his face. So Jesus looks upon us. He is not impressed with what we have come to be, but He is profoundly impressed with what we may come to be by and by.

Not long ago I received a letter from a precious girl who was being tried in the fire as gold is tried. "I am so glad," she wrote, "that you found me when you did. I had lost my grip. And you came to me and said that you believed in me. And when you went away I said to myself, 'There's a man who believes in me, and I am going to make myself worthy of his faith in me.'"

As I thought over that letter a sense of shame came over me. I had told that girl that I believed in her because she was a wonderful spirit who had already proved herself to be worthy of the faith of those who knew her. It was nothing for me to believe in her. And she was thanking me for it! And I thought, how different is the Master's faith in us! We believe in people because of what they are, and when they fail, our ground of faith is gone, and we believe in them no more. Jesus believes in us for what we may become, and when we fail, the ground of His faith is still there, and He goes on believing in us still.

When our hearts catch this appeal we are no longer concerned over the difficulties of faith which we encounter to-day. Difficulties or no difficulties, when we realise that He believes in us we are going to believe in Him. And we are not going to stop with mere believing; we are going back to our work with a great passion-awakening ambition. We are going to say: "There is One who believes in me, and by His help I am going to be worthy of His faith in me."

II

CLEARING THE WAY FOR A VIEW OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

I

WE shall get other glimpses of Jesus in real life, but let us now turn to the picture we have of Him in the Gospels. Before we open the Bible, however, it is important that we should come to an understanding. This is always essential where two or more persons approach the Bible together, for without a common aim and, in some degree, a common point of view, we shall find little but confusion and difficulties for our pains.

Let us agree at the outset that we will not concern ourselves about any question that is not bound up with our general aim. We want to get a clear, satisfying vision of the real Jesus—a vision that will enable us to cast ourselves upon him as our divine Lord and Saviour and Life-giver and Guide in perfect trust for to-day, for to-morrow and forever. If we would keep this aim in view, we must rid our minds of most of the religious questions which Christians have been thinking about for the last ten years. For example, we must dismiss this widespread notion that

we must do something to check the present decline of faith in Christianity. We are not concerned just now about Christianity; we are concerned about Christ. To be perfectly frank, I am not sure that there has been any decline of faith in Christianity. I see many evidences of a decline of faith in some things which have been mistaken for Christianity, and for these evidences I am profoundly grateful. But I am not sure that there is any less faith, to-day, among people who know what real Christianity is when they see it, than there was, let us say, twenty years ago.

As for the supposed change in the attitude of the outside world toward our religion, I think we Christians have been taking our critics too seriously. We have accepted without question and have repeated with them ever since the war, the solemn assurance they gave us during the war, that the world has lost faith in Christianity, when, as a matter of fact, we know that the world did not have any to lose. As I have said, there is among church people a decline of faith in some things we have mistaken for Christianity, but neither in the Church nor in the outside world do I find any evidence of the often-reported growing disappointment in real Christianity. People who have never come in actual touch with real Christianity have never expected anything of it, while those who have come in actual touch with it still believe as earnestly as ever in the real thing they came in touch with. For instance, the

man of the world who professes to have lost faith in Christianity still admits, when you question him, that he has faith in the Christianity he saw in his mother, or in a certain neighbour who so bravely stood by him in his greatest trouble.

What we are concerned about just now is not the reported loss of faith in Christianity either in the Church or in the outside world, but the actual decline of faith in the Person who is the only source of the life that makes real Christianity possible.

Learned agnostics assure us that this loss of faith in the deity of Jesus is but the natural and necessary result of the progress of modern intelligence. Science, we are informed, will let us hold on to a human Jesus, but it will not allow us to believe in a divine Christ. (A professor in a Christian college was recently reported as saying to his class that at the present rate of progress in scientific intelligence, nobody in America will believe that Jesus is divine, twenty years from now.) On the other hand, we have learned believers who are equally sure that the decline is due to the lack of scientific intelligence among Christians. The modern Christian, they tell us, is losing his faith in Jesus because both the pulpit and the pew lack the scholarship that is necessary to formulate a belief about Him that will harmonise with the demands of science. I confess I have been unable to find any evidence that either is right. It is easy to hold such theories in one's

library, but if you attempt to take them out into life you will experience some rude shocks.

When I talk with an intelligent man who imagines that he has been compelled to give up his faith in Jesus because of the developments of modern intelligence, I usually find that he did not give it up at all, but that it gradually passed away under influences of which he was not conscious. And when I talk with an unlearned man who has lost his faith in Jesus I usually find that he has had a similar experience. The modern man may keep away from Jesus for intellectual reasons, but he does not turn away from Him for intellectual reasons. Aside from the blinding power of sin, the greatest enemy to faith to-day is to be found in our modern civilisation. People are losing their faith in Jesus mainly because they have been losing their sense of His reality, and they have been losing their sense of His reality because modern science (quite unintentionally) has produced a civilisation in which it is difficult to preserve a sense of the reality of anything that is beyond matter. Science has done so much to develop the material side of civilisation and the spiritual forces of the world have done so little to develop its spiritual side, that matter has reached a height where it practically overwhelms spirit.

If this seems an exaggeration, start out to-day to lead a purely materialistic life and see how our civilisation will rally its forces to help you. And

then—say, to-morrow morning—start out to lead a spiritual life, or simply to get at the truth about a thing of the spirit, and see how it will rally its forces to hinder you. You may reply that our present civilisation is providing us with more means to do good than the race ever had before. This is true. Never were the means to help provided with such a lavish hand. Our civilisation builds a railway track to the needy, builds a modern freight train on it, and fills forty cars with supplies. But it puts no fire in the locomotive, no steam in the boiler. On the contrary, if you strike a match to start a fire, ten to one it will blow it out. Civilisation's supply train is like a man who has enough wealth to feed a million human beings, but is without enough passion for humanity in his heart to feed one. Not until the spark of heavenly fire finds its way into his heart will anything happen. Our civilisation deals only in things. It puts the means in our hands, but it puts no motive in our hearts—no divine passion, no Good Samaritan. At best it gives us a chance to play now and then at being Good Samaritans; but it doesn't make us Good Samaritans. Indeed, it begins to put obstacles in our way the moment we betray a desire to become Good Samaritans.

II

A hundred years ago the world was far more selfish than it is now, but it was nothing like as

greedy. We are never greedy for the things we know we can never get, and in those days the luxuries and comforts of life were so far beyond the reach of the average man that he hardly gave them a thought. He left them to kings and the few rich men who owned the kings, and his mind and heart were free for other things. But soon modern science began to make luxuries and comforts which far excelled anything that kings had ever dreamed of, and at a cost which made it possible for the average man to hope to get them, and soon the whole civilised world started off on a mad rush for them. And this frenzy for things, things, things, turned our civilisation into a wild, furious, blinding, deafening maelstrom of material activities, material pleasures, material possessions, and in this maelstrom the average man of to-day spends all his days and half of his nights so completely submerged in matter that the eyes of his soul never have a chance. No wonder he loses his sense of the reality of spirit.

Our modern civilisation not only magnifies matter at the expense of spirit, but it has made so many things to make the world go faster that it is now going at a rate which destroys the sense of proportion of all who yield to its demand and go along with it. And when a man loses his sense of proportion he loses all sense of spiritual values, for the reason that he takes the light things of life seriously and the serious things of life lightly. If I were asked what has impressed me most, in

my travels over this continent, I should say that it is the fact that the average American, whatever he may really feel, does not show half as much concern over keeping his home full of love as he does over keeping his automobile tank full of gas. Since he became a victim of hurry, or the illusion of hurry, he has lost his sense of proportion, and now takes the light things of life seriously and the serious things of life lightly. When we realise how large a proportion of the American people is in this state of mind we do not wonder that the name that is oftenest upon the lips of the average Christian is not the name of Him who for nearly two thousand years we have declared to be our only hope, but the name of our most famous football player.

Moreover, the hurry that has been brought about by the over-development of the material side of our civilisation is a deadly enemy to spiritual comradeship, without which we never come in touch with anything that is of the spirit, whether the Great Spirit or the spirits of the loved ones He has given us. Just what this means I shall try to bring out in one of the following chapters.

But this is not all. Our civilisation has turned its back upon the only kind of thinking in which it is possible to use our spiritual vision and, therefore, to grasp anything that is of the spirit. Our fathers, whose wisdom we moderns have taken for our best joke, had two kinds of thinking—the kind they did when they were trying to get at the

facts about matter, which we call scientific or laboratory thinking, and the kind they did when they were trying to get at the truths of the spirit, which our fathers knew as quiet-hour thinking or meditation. In scientific thinking one makes use of one's physical and intellectual eyes only; in quiet-hour thinking or meditation one depends largely upon his spiritual vision. It would seem that common sense would demand that when we are trying to get at the facts about matter we should use the scientific method, and that when we are trying to get at the truth about things of the spirit we should use the quiet-hour method, and this used to be a commonly-accepted rule.

But a generation ago, the achievements of science through the laboratory method grew to such startling proportions that the world lost its head over them and jumped to the conclusion that laboratory or scientific thinking was the only true thinking; and many scholars of the church, falling into this illusion, dropped the quiet hour out of their lives and undertook to think their way through the Bible and the religious problems of the time by the laboratory method. In other words they turned their backs upon the only thinking in which the spirit is given a chance to grasp the things of the spirit and undertook to study religion, which is a thing of the spirit, by a method which was designed only for the investigation of matter and makes no use of the spiritual vision whatever.

Here, then, are three gigantic obstacles which our modern civilisation has unwittingly thrown in the way of the man who would like to get at the truth about anything that is of the spirit—about the Great Spirit, about the divine spirit of Jesus, about the spirits of our fellow men, about anything that is beyond matter:

First, the overwhelming materialism of our everyday life, which gives us a chance to use our physical and intellectual vision, but no chance to use our spiritual vision.

Second, the frightful speed developed by fast machinery and the ever-growing greed for things—a speed which not only destroys our sense of proportion and leaves us to take the serious things of life lightly and the light things of life seriously, but cheats us out of the quiet moments of life—the only moments which we can devote to spiritual comradeship and thus keep us in vital touch with the Spirit of God on the one hand and the spirits of our fellow-men on the other.

Third, the illusion developed by the wonderful achievements of science that it is only by scientific thinking that we can hope to get at the truth of anything that exists, whether matter or spirit.

Any one of these obstacles is big enough to shut out our vision of God, our vision of the divine in Jesus, our vision of anything that is of the spirit, and with all three in the way, I can see but one chance for the modern man who really wants to

know the truth about anything that is eternally worth while.

Here and there one comes upon a man of remarkable spiritual power and vision. He is strong enough for his job and his vision seems to sweep the horizon of the universe. You instinctively feel that he knows God; that he is in vital touch with the God we have been seeking in the face of Jesus Christ; that he is also in touch with the spirits of his fellow-men; that it is through his vital touch with God in Christ on the one hand that he receives the strength which he is so effectively using in ministering to the follow-men with whom he is in touch on the other. Talk with these rare men and you will find that every one of them has the same secret. Every one of them regularly pulls himself out of this wild, blinding whirlpool we call our everyday life and seeks a quiet spot where he can empty his mind and heart of every material thing, take his bearings, restore his mental and spiritual balance, give his spiritual vision the same chance in the world of spirit that he has been giving his physical and intellectual vision in the world of matter, and stays there until Christ has become real to him, until his sense of the reality of spirit has again become as strong as his sense of the reality of matter. These men have found the only way known by which the modern man can give his soul a chance.

This suggests the method I wish to follow in our present quest. I simply ask you to seek with

me a quiet place apart from the blinding and deafening materialities of our everyday life, where our spiritual vision will have as good a chance as our physical and intellectual vision, and think with me about Jesus, not in the way we would think to get at the material facts about the human Jesus, but in the only way in which we can hope to get at the truth about the real Jesus—the only way in which we can become conscious of the divine Christ in Jesus.

Let me add that it is useless for us to seek a quiet place for this task if we are not going to leave behind us the things which make quiet thinking impossible. Above all, we must leave behind us the spirit of controversy and the critical habit that is usually associated with it. I am aware that there are still good people in the world who believe that controversy is a good thing. They tell us that it clears the atmosphere so that we can see better. But I have been out in the Southwest where they have tornadoes, and I have found that a tornado clears the atmosphere wonderfully, so that we can see better, but—it doesn't leave us much to see!

III

Another matter about which we need to have at least a working agreement is the Bible itself. I do not mean to intimate that Christian students can, or ever will come to an agreement about the Bible. But they can come to a working agreement. If

we are going to get a clear conception of the real Jesus of the Gospels we must at least agree that when we study Jesus in the Gospels, it should be in full view of the fact that He exists outside of the Gospels. We can hardly imagine that even Paul could have seen Jesus very clearly, whatever he might have learned in a book, if he had never come upon Him in his experience. Fifty years ago, our poverty-stricken schools made a desperate effort to teach science apart from experiment. The result was pathetic: the average boy grew up with the idea that chemistry was a book. The only pupils who got a real vision of chemistry were the pupils of a few zealous teachers who managed, with the aid of a crude bit of home-made apparatus, to do a little experimenting on their own account. We have had the same experience in our religious teaching. All through the history of the Church the teachers of religion who succeeded in giving men a real vision of Jesus were those who taught what they learned of Him in the Gospels along with what they learned of Him in experiment or experience. If we attempt to learn the Jesus of the Gospels by studying them apart from experience, we are not likely to get a much better vision of Him than the pupils of fifty years ago, who were taught chemistry apart from experiment, got of chemistry. Jesus is in the Gospels, but He is something more, infinitely more, than the contents of a book. If we would get a clear picture of him in the Gospels we must re-

mind ourselves that He is bigger than the Gospels, that His existence does not depend upon the Gospels, and that however highly we may think of the story of Jesus—and we cannot think *too* highly of it—the fate of Jesus is in no sense bound up with it. Let us not forget, that if we exalt the story of Jesus above Jesus, we shall have to give up His deity or divinity, for to be divine is to be self-existent, and it is impossible to conceive of Him as self-existent and at the same time make Him dependent upon something that is not self-existent.

It is also important to bear in mind that we cannot help those who join us in this quest, to get a clear conception of the Jesus of the Gospels if we insist upon forcing their minds through the same channel by which we have found Him. It is so easy to feel that our way is the logical way and that the logical way is the only right way. But neither is true. I shall probably be called illogical because I shall ask you to consider my reasons for believing in the Jesus of the Bible without first giving you my reasons for believing in the Bible. But we humans are not logical. When we are bent on finding the truth, we don't confine ourselves to the logical channel; if we don't find it by that route we try to reach it the other way round.

I realise that we are living in a day in which it is much easier to get a man to believe in Jesus first and in the Bible afterwards, than it is to get him to believe in the Bible first and in Jesus after-

wards; and if I find an earnest inquirer who is not sure about the Bible I say nothing to him about the logical way. I know that many men who could not find their way to Him by that route have found it the other way round, and so I say to him: "You have a sufficiently good opinion of the Bible to try to find out about Jesus in the Gospels. Drop the problem of believing in the Bible for the present and fix your mind upon the problem of believing in Jesus. Learn of Him in the Gospels, and when you come to believe in Him you will say, 'I don't believe in Jesus because I believe in the Bible; I believe in the Bible because I believe in Jesus.' "

After all, does anyone ever believe very deeply in the Bible until he comes to believe in the Jesus of the Bible? Here is a book which claims to be an authority on bread. You and I, let us say, were brought up in a tropical country where people use bananas for bread. We don't know bread. Now we may read this book a hundred times, and however strongly it may appeal to our reason, if we never use bread we shall never be sure whether it is an authority or not. Not until we make a faithful use of bread and study its effects sufficiently to know just what it does for us, and then turn to this book and discover that it confirms our experience, shall we be sure that it is the authority it claims to be. So it is with the Bible, which we accept as an authority on Him who is the Bread of Life. We may persuade ourselves that we believe in it, but the question of its authority is

never really settled in our minds until we have made a faithful use of the Bread of Life which it offers us and then turn to the Book to find that it agrees with our experience.

Many a man who has never been able to satisfy himself with the usual arguments for the truth or inspiration of the Bible has been amazed to find, when he came to believe in Jesus, that he needed no argument. It needs no logic to prove that a human being, unaided by Heaven, could never have given us a picture of the divine Christ.

After all, the real problem as to the Bible to-day, is not the problem of getting men to believe in it, but the problem of getting them to approach it from a point of view that will enable them to see that it is worthy of belief.

IV

For years I accepted the Bible not for what I saw in it, but for what I thought I ought to see in it. What I actually saw I would hardly admit, even to myself. To this day it is humiliating to me to confess, even to myself, that while the great and the good of all the Christian ages had seen wonderful things in it, I had seen little but trouble. Fortunately for me there came a brighter day.

I did not learn much in my university days, but I learned two things which I would not part with for the world. And I did not get them out of a

book: they were only two bits of practical advice picked up in the classroom. One of them came from that dear old professor of English literature whom I have referred to as the best man I have ever known—"Old Mang."

For several weeks we had been studying Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—that is to say, we had been analysing it. We had analysed it down to the last line, the last phrase, the last word. We had analysed it to death. In all this "Old Mang" had followed the rules; but when he closed the book he gave us a word of his own.

"Now, young gentlemen," he said, "you are prepared to read *Hamlet*."

We boys sighed. It was a very audible sigh. "Old Mang" smiled and went on: "Some fine afternoon, put your *Hamlet* in your pocket and go out into the country for a walk. Stroll around through the woods and fields until your mind has emptied itself of every material interest and thought; then lie down under a tree on the edge of the wood where you can look up at the sky. Now be still. Be still until you have fallen under the spell of the stillness. Then take your *Hamlet* out of your pocket and read it. Don't study it, don't analyse it, don't pause over a difficult word; just read it; read it rapidly; drink it down in great gulps, with no purpose whatever but just to get at the soul of it. And then you will begin to know *Hamlet*."

I did not try "Old Mang's" advice with *Hamlet*

—I was tired of *Hamlet*; but some years afterwards, I began to try it with my Bible, and I made what was to me a wonderful discovery. I found that a book—not a mere mass of information, but a message to men—is like a man, in that it has a soul as well as a body; and that just as you can dissect a man's body down to the last atom and miss his soul, so you can analyse a book down to the last word and utterly miss its soul—its message to your own soul. Also I found that if one approaches the story of Jesus with his intellect alone, he may get at all the material facts about the human Jesus, but he will never get at the truth about the spirit of Jesus; he will never come to know the divine Christ.

This of course was nothing new. Science teaches us to-day that we can only grasp like with like, matter with matter, mind with mind. The brilliant scientific philosopher Bergson has gone so far as to assert that pure intellect, being material, is unable to grasp anything that is beyond matter, and if there is anything beyond matter we shall have to find something else with which to grasp it. I cannot pull a thought out of my mind with a pair of dentist's forceps; neither can I pick up a pair of dentist's forceps with my mind.

I cannot get at a scientific fact, which is a material thing, with the means which I use to get at a spiritual truth; neither can a scientist get at a

spiritual truth by the means which he uses to get at a material fact.

And long before the days of science Jesus taught us the very same thing. He said to the Samaritan woman: "You think that to worship God—to get in touch with God—you must go to that material temple on the hill yonder and use certain material forms. You are mistaken: God is a spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit—with their spirits." Later, when Peter fervently declared that Jesus was the Son of God, the Master said to him: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." The truth had not come to Peter as a material fact would have come, from a material source, by material means. It was a spiritual truth and it had come to his spirit from spirit, from the Great Spirit himself. And Paul, following Jesus, taught the same truth. "These things," he said in writing about the things of the spirit, "are spiritually discerned, or measured, or grasped; you see them with the eyes of your spirit."

Here was a great fundamental truth as old as the hills—a truth taught by religion and confirmed by science so far as it relates to its own sphere. Yet I, who had been taught by both religious and scientific teachers, had never so much as caught a hint of it.

But I did not fully realise its significance, and as a consequence I did not fully realise the value

of "Old Mang's" advice until I had that tragical experience of which I have spoken, which gave me a new view of life and as a consequence gave me a new Bible. When I realised that the real values of life are spiritual and that the material side is only incidental, it dawned upon me that just as I had been magnifying the material side of life above the spiritual I had been magnifying the material side of the Bible above the spiritual. The next moment it occurred to me that practically all the difficulties about the Bible which had troubled me were about its material side—the incidental side—and that because I had habitually magnified the material side of life I had been magnifying the material difficulties of the Bible.

I had done this so much that when I went to the Old Testament, where most of them are to be found, they would immediately begin to crowd around me, and soon they would shut out everything else from my vision. That horrible story of the two bears that ate up the forty-two children would loom up so big before me that I could not get a glimpse of God or His truth anywhere. When I opened the little Book of Jonah I could see nothing but that big fish. And the longer I looked at it the bigger it grew; it grew so big that it completely hid the whole message of the book from my eyes. For years that book was nothing to me but a fish story. But when my eyes were opened to a new vision of life and I came to the book realising that all real values are spiritual

and that the material is only incidental—when I was no longer obsessed with exaggerated ideas of the importance of material facts, but unspeakably hungry for spiritual truth—for God’s message to my soul—in a word, when I opened this Book of Jonah looking for the eternal verities of God, by the side of which the biggest fish is but a microscopic germ, the fish I saw didn’t frighten me a bit. I simply said: “Get out of my way; you are not half as frightful as I thought you were. I am not interested in you, anyway; I am interested in God. I want to know how God feels toward a poor fellow who forsakes Him and gets into a whale of a trouble and then repents. I want to know how God feels toward poor benighted heathen when their sins bring them to the verge of destruction and they wake up and become sorry.” And when I had “shooed” the big fish away I picked up the little book and simply drank it in, just to get at the soul of it, just to get at the mind and spirit of God; and soon there came to me that wonderful vision of the infinite compassion of God for poor sinners—that wonderful vision which sets our hearts to singing—

“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There’s a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty.”

And that big fish hasn’t bothered me since.

III

BEHOLD THE MAN!

I

I HAVE said that I was first led to believe in Jesus by what I saw of Him outside of the Bible—in the lives of those in whom he lived, beginning with my mother. I now come to another reason. I believe in Him because of what I have learned of him inside of the Bible—rather, because of what I have learned of him in the Bible since I began to follow “Old Mang’s” advice. I had been content to analyse the Gospel-story, which was all right as far as it went. We must analyse the story or we shall never get at the material facts about the human Jesus. But if we never go further—if after analysing we do not take this story to a quiet place where we can turn our minds away from mere material facts, and synthesise it—grasp it as a whole to get at the soul of it—to get at and saturate ourselves with the mind and spirit of Jesus—we shall never get a vision of the divine Christ. So long as I was content to seek material facts about Jesus I was continually pausing to say, “How human! How wonderfully human!”; but since I have learned to go further, while I still find myself impressed with

his humanness, there are times when I catch a glimpse of something that brings me up with a jerk, and I open my eyes wide and exclaim, "That is not human, that's divine!"

II

Now let us imagine that we have been following "Old Mang's" advice. We have brought the story of Jesus into a quiet place and have been synthesising it—just trying to grasp it as a whole, drinking it in to get at His mind and spirit. Now let us close the book. What do you see! I will tell you what I see:

A great crowd is waiting at the roadside. The news came last night that the Teacher was on His way southward and would probably pass through the neighbourhood this morning. The whole country for miles around has turned out to meet Him—curious folk to gaze upon Him, heart-hungry folk to listen to Him, troubled folk bringing their sick and afflicted ones to be healed by Him. A few moments ago a passing traveller brought the news that he was just beyond the hill, and now all the people have stopped talking and are craning their necks to catch the first glimpse of Him.

And now He appears at the top of the hill. Everybody is so still you wonder if the people have stopped breathing. Just over there stands a mother with a sick baby that is resting its head upon her shoulder. At the sight of the great

Teacher her heart gives a bound and she begins to tremble. Her first impulse is to run to meet Him, but something checks her. The moments drag, whole hours pass, it seems to her, and now He is near.

“O Teacher,” she cries, “have pity on my poor little sick baby.” And then she turns her back so that He can see its face. Its little chin is resting heavily upon the mother’s shoulder. There is a deathly pallor on its face. Its little eyes are set in a glaze. Its little lips are pinched and parched. The Teacher pauses and without a word turns toward the little thing and places His hand gently upon its head. A light comes into the little eyes and they open wide to Him in a strange stare; the little lips part in a faint smile, there is a slight blush in its cheeks, and then the little thing fairly cooes out its new-found joy.

There is a gentle word to the mother and the Teacher passes on. A moment later he comes upon a little cripple boy leaning on two crooked sticks. He pauses and lays His hand upon his shoulder. The little fellow looks up into the stranger’s face and suddenly becomes conscious of a great flood of life pouring down through his little body, down through his little withered legs; and dropping his crooked sticks he impulsively kisses the Stranger’s hand and darts off to tell his friends what has happened.

We leave Him just here and go on our way; but a few days later we come upon Him again. It is

in the freshness of early morning. The air is balmy and mellow, and the sunbeams are dancing like fairies upon the dewdrops on the grass. The sky is as blue as a baby's eyes. He is sitting upon a hillside feasting His eyes upon a glorious scene stretched out before Him. The fields as far as His eyes can reach are carpeted with beautiful flowers, white and purple and crimson and gold, and through the heavens are darting here and there happy birds, leaving the echo of their sweet music behind them.

Now He turns and looks into the faces of a group of friends who have gathered around Him, and it is easy to see that His heart has filled up with pity. Never before has He seen a contrast so strange and so painful. In the outstretched landscape He has seen beauty, peace, joy, contentment; but the faces before Him are seamed with anxiety and care, and the eyes that should reflect the calm of heaven are filled with pitiful yearning and vague foreboding.

And now He is speaking. "Dear friends," He is saying gently, "why are your hearts so troubled? Why do you consume your souls with anxious care? Look at those birds. Do they fly as if they carried a burden on their hearts? Listen to their sweet music. Do you hear one anxious note? Do they wear out their hearts with fear for the morrow? They do not even toil for a living and yet your Father feeds them. If God cares for the birds that do not toil, will He not care for His

own children who labour so hard all the day long for their daily bread?"

And thus He talks on so beautifully, so calmly of the Father's loving care, until at last a strange light comes into His listeners' faces, and a strange peace into their hearts; for never has a man spoken to men that way before.

Again He goes on His way and we follow Him. Presently He comes upon a father who is broken-hearted over his boy. And His heart goes out to him and He heals his boy. (Father, are you broken-hearted over your boy?) It reminds us of something we saw Him do in another place. A father came to Him broken-hearted over his daughter. He went with him to his home and in the upper room stood before the white, still form of a beautiful girl. And His heart went out to her and He reached out His hands to her and said—not in the cold, formal words of our translation, "Maiden, arise," but with a strange tenderness,—"Little darling, get up."

Again we come upon Him as he is speaking to a great crowd gathered before Him. It is a weary throng of hard-pressed, hard-driven men whose backs are almost broken under the burdens of life. Now He pauses, and as a mother would stretch out her arms to a little weary child and say, "Come to mother," the Teacher stretches out His arms to that weary crowd and says, "Come unto Me. Come unto Me and I will give you rest."

He talks on and our hearts are filled with a

strange yearning, and you say to me, "Let us see if we can get nearer to Him so that we can get a better view of His face." And we elbow our way through the crowd and now we are standing within a few yards of Him. What do you see?

After the generation that saw Jesus in the flesh had passed away His followers became curious to know something of His personal appearance. The Early Christian Fathers, recalling the picture of the Messiah in Isaiah—"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him"—took the description literally and decided that Jesus was physically very unattractive. A very ancient imaginative picture gives him a very homely face. (It is significant, however, that as you look at it it becomes strangely attractive.) Of course, as every Bible student knows, the prophet's picture is not a picture of the person of Jesus at all; it is a picture of the Messiah in his character as Messiah. What the prophet is saying is that when the Messiah comes He will be so different (in his character, mission and work) from what they expect and want, that they will find nothing attractive in Him.

We know nothing of the features of Jesus except his eyes, but I am sure that He was not ugly and for a very simple reason. Bring the meanest, most repulsive-looking man in the community to Christ, get him to open his whole being to Christ until he is thoroughly saturated with His spirit,

and it will not be a month before people will begin to say: "I used to think that man was horribly ugly, but he doesn't seem to be at all ugly now." We have found that the greatest beautifier in the world is love, and believing as I do that Jesus was Love Incarnate, it is impossible for me to imagine that He was unattractive.

Wipe out Isaiah's picture from your mind and think a moment. Let the scenes in the Master's life we have just recalled pass in review before your mental vision. Now let us look at Him again. What do you see? To me it is the most satisfying face I have ever looked upon. Where have I ever seen anything like it? So pure, so gentle, so strong; so full of light, and love, and dignity, and poise, and peace! And when have I ever heard such a voice? So sweet, so tender, so mellow with sympathy; musical as the waters of a mountain brook, yet so firm, so steady, so brave!

III

I have said that nothing is told us of any of His features except His eyes. I do not wonder at that; the Gospel writers were trying to help us see His soul, and the eyes, as we have long been saying, are the windows of the soul. You have doubtless noticed that they were deeply impressed by the way He had of using His eyes. He did not look at people in a casual way. The word expresses the idea of a deep, fixed, intense gaze.

Quick as He was to note every sign of suffering, He had the searching gaze of one who is seeking to get down beneath the surface to the souls of men. Someone has said that if Jesus should walk down Broadway to-day he would be deeply interested in our sky-scrapers. The Jesus I see in the Gospels is not like that. He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and if He were walking down Broadway to-day, He would probably be so busy looking through the eyes of men for the lost that he would hardly compliment us by looking up at our sky-scrapers.

Here comes a young man in great haste and drops upon his knees before Him. He has money and no doubt the little money-bag that Treasurer Judas is carrying is almost empty; but the whole interest of Jesus is immediately centred upon his soul. "And Jesus looking upon him"—the old version says "beholding him," but the word means that He was looking at him with an intense, soul-searching gaze. And when His eyes caught a glimpse of the young man's soul He—"loved him."

He is always looking at men in that soul-searching way. He has a peculiar habit of pausing when He is about to say or do something of unusual importance—something with which He wants to reach the consciences of men—and turning to the man on His extreme right and searching His eyes with that same intense gaze, and then passing on to the next and the next until He has gone round.

It is an intense moment. I can see Him as His eyes go from one to another, His gaze piercing through their eyes to their souls. And then their consciences are beginning to stir. Nothing else is stirring. Everything is so still people are afraid to breathe. And now—

“And when he had looked round about upon them all, he said—.”

Notice His way of touching people. In analysing the Gospels you may guess, as some have done, that it is a touch of magic; but if you will read the whole story in the way I have suggested, you will realise that nothing could be further from the truth, and you are likely to conclude that in most cases it is simply a touch of sympathy. When you go to see a sick man who is not suffering or having a hard time in other ways, you are satisfied to shake hands with him. But if it is a pitiful case—one that pulls hard upon your heart-strings—you are just bound to touch him. You lay your hand upon his shoulder, and if you are encouraged to go further, you will lay it gently upon his brow.

Notice His way of speaking. He is so different. Other rabbis are so harsh, so bitter, and have such superior airs, that it is a cross to listen to them. Jesus not only has something good to say, but He has a wonderfully charming way of saying it. “And the people wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from his lips.” The word apparently expresses the idea of grace-

filled words gracefully or graciously uttered. The people were carried away with His winsome way of talking.

Apparently He spoke with an almost irresistible magnetism. This, at any rate, is the simplest explanation of some unusual things that happened in His audiences now and then. Watch that mother standing on the outskirts of the crowd with her baby in her arms. It is a public gathering and public gatherings are men's affairs; the women should stay at home! But the women come with their babies and little children and stand on the outskirts of the crowd and gaze upon the wonderful Teacher and strain their ears to catch every word. There are tears in the mother's eyes, and now her lips are moving, and unconscious of the people around her she is saying quite aloud to herself: "Oh! I want Him to put His hand on my baby's head."

But it is a man's affair and she must not intrude. All the same, a moment later, hardly conscious of what she is doing, she is pressing slowly through the crowd. People begin talking about her, but she does not hear; her eyes are fixed upon His face. And she presses onward until—but it's a familiar story.

"Get back there! This is no place for women and children." And her heart sinks within her. But the Teacher intervenes and a moment later the baby is sitting in the crook of His left arm,

and now He is laying His right hand gently upon its little head.

In like manner a poor woman of the street—but this, too, is a familiar story.

And now He ceases to speak and rises to His feet. Instantly the people begin to crowd forward with their sick and lame and blind, and there is great confusion. There is confusion everywhere except immediately around Him. There is something in His face that calms the hearts of people, and there is a strange calm as He moves quietly among them. There is a word here, and a touch there, and the sick are well again, and the blind see and the lame walk!

IV

What impression does this strange scene make upon you? If you are very modern—whatever that may mean—you will say that you don't think much of impressions; that to get at the truth about a thing we must steel ourselves against impressions and confine ourselves to the task of getting at the facts. But you have a very dear friend whose soul you have plumbed to the depths. Did you come to know him by that method? Have you ever come to know *any* man by that method?

How are you impressed by these wonders which Jesus performs upon the bodies of men? When we take the story of a miracle out of its setting and undertake to analyse it, we practically put it

under a microscope, for it becomes magnified in our minds and its difficulties are magnified with it. And naturally it does not make a very pleasant impression upon us. But we are not analysing now; we are simply taking these incidents as parts of the whole story, and we are not trying to settle questions about miracles; we are only trying to get at the mind and spirit of Jesus. Looking at these incidents in this way, how do they impress you?

I will tell you how they impress me. When I am analysing the Gospels to get at the facts—the material facts—they seem utterly contrary to nature; but when I take these Gospels off to a quiet spot and read them with no aim but to get at His mind and spirit, I begin to think more about the divine Christ and less about the human Jesus, and when I think of these wonders as the acts of a divine Christ—a supernatural Christ—they no longer appear unnatural; they only appear supernatural—above natural. And I am satisfied. Why should I be disturbed over the supernatural deeds of One who is Himself supernatural? I cannot conceive of Jesus as divine and at the same time limit His knowledge and power to our human level.

But just now, perhaps, you are in a questioning mood and nothing that you can think of about these physical miracles will satisfy you. What will you do? Will you turn your back upon Jesus because you cannot accept the record of His mir-

acles? Wait a moment: these are not all of His miracles; they are only His physical miracles. If you cannot accept the miracles which He performs on men's bodies, why not take a look at the miracles which He performs on their souls? Have you any objection to His spiritual miracles? Look! Here comes a woman who a year ago was in a terrible fix. People said she was full of devils. They said that Mary Magdelene had seven demons; but they used seven as a complete number and what they meant was, not that she had just seven devils, but that she was full of devils. (Perhaps you know somebody who is in that fix.) But look into her beautiful eyes, *now*. Would you call her a devil, or would you call her an angel?

You say you cannot accept the miracles which Jesus performed on men's bodies: here is a far greater miracle; how does this wonder impress you? You see no difficulty about it? And why?

Is it because you have seen something like it with your own eyes? "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

If I may judge from my own experience there is no other point of view from which a man of modern intelligence can look upon the physical miracles of Jesus with any considerable degree of patience. So long as we confine ourselves to analysing the story of Jesus to get at the material facts, we never find these accounts of physical miracles pleasant reading; but when we take the story to a quiet place and undertake to get at the

soul of it, these records of His wonder-working seldom give us any serious trouble; usually we are quite willing to hold on to them, just as they are, and wait for a day of better light.

v

But the question arises, Why did Jesus perform these wonders? We are not facing this question very bravely to-day. For years we moderns have been trying to persuade ourselves that Jesus had the same idea of the value of physical comfort, and that He was concerned for the physical to bravely face the fact that He did not—that He was supremely indifferent to His own physical comfort, and that He was concerned for the physical comfort of others, only in so far as it affected their spiritual welfare. Jesus did not heal men's bodies because He was impressed, as we are, with the value of bodies, but because He was impressed with the value of souls. He healed them, not that they might understand that He sympathised with them in their physical needs, but that they might understand that He sympathised with them in *all* their needs and might be encouraged to come to Him with their deepest needs.

Catch the picture! This Man who speaks with infinite tenderness to the helpless—this man who is love itself, is a terror to all diseases, all demons, all evil things. He goes about overflowing with virtue; and before the virtue which goes out of

Him evil spirits flee and all diseases vanish. No evil thing can stand in His presence. The powers of darkness struggle to keep their hold, but are forced into precipitate retreat. Death itself, at the sound of His voice, relinquishes its clammy grasp on its victim and is gone. And not once does He say, "Your case is hopeless; I can do nothing for you." Every need is met. Every heart is satisfied. Everybody goes home happy.

What is the secret of it all? There is but one word that accounts for the daily life of this Man who went about doing good. He is a lover. Always His face shows an infinite, loving sympathy. Always His hand is gentle. Any other view of Him makes Him a hopeless mystery. He is not a magician. He is not a welfare-worker. He is not a health officer. He is a lover.

Perhaps you will say, "I can't see that. When I read the story I cannot see any difference between Him and a benevolent physician going about and doing his work without pay." Very well; but we can feel some things that we cannot see. Can you not feel the difference? I never made any progress in my efforts to get at the truth about the things of the spirit until I began to take note of the impressions which I received from them. For example: when I depended only upon what I could see, the story of Jesus driving the traders out of the Temple meant, either a feverish attempt at reform, or a sudden burst of bad temper. But when I learned to pause before it and consult my

impressions I realised that it was neither. Jesus did not drive out those desecrators with the hope of purifying the Temple-worship. Nor was it an outburst of bad temper. He did it because He could not look upon the desecration of His Father's house without giving vent to His indignation and without rebuking the desecrators. No man was so perfectly self-composed as Jesus, yet the sight of sin stirred His soul to the depths. Now He was grieved, now He was tremendously indignant. He did not often give vent to His indignation, but it was easy to see that He was never indifferent. He could not be indifferent. The Son of God, purer than a sunbeam, could no more look upon sin with indifference than a refined woman could be indifferent to the accumulation of dust and cobwebs in her home.

Sometimes we ask ourselves why God gave us this horrible temper of ours, when we have no use for it and must spend half of our time in trying to hold it down. Well, God did not give us a horrible temper. He gave us a great wealth of feeling, an overpowering current which He intended that we should direct, now into the channel of love, now into the channel of zeal, now into the channel of indignation—a current which if properly directed would make us a power for good in the world; and instead of directing it into the proper channels we allow it to turn off into the channel of hate. Or, to change the figure, God gave us great engines of love, and zeal, and in-

dignation with which to bring great things to pass in the world, and we have allowed our evil nature to tap the pipe and draw off our "temper" into a destructive engine of our own making. The picture of Jesus cleansing the Temple is a picture of an overflowing current of feeling directed into a right channel.

So long as we only ask, "What do I see?" we are continually missing the truth about Jesus. We see Him eating with publicans and sinners and we decide that there must be something wrong with our ideas of sin; evidently Jesus was fond of sinners. But when we pause long enough to look into His face as He is eating with them and note the impression that face makes upon us, we come to an entirely different conclusion. Elsewhere I have referred to a rare spirit I knew in my university days—"Old Mang." I believe I said that I never knew a nobler soul. His heart was firm; his life was blameless; he was a walking sermon of goodness to the entire community. And yet he was often found in company with the worst boys at the university. If I had merely followed my eyes I should have said that "Old Mang" did not hate sin as a Christian is supposed to hate it. If one saw him walking through the campus with a boy, one would be almost sure that his companion was a bad boy whose badness had gotten him into trouble.

For when a bad boy got into trouble he always went to "Old Mang." That great soul had a horror

of all sin, and he did not sympathise with boys in their sins; but he did sympathise with them *because of their sins*. And he felt for them so truly that they were drawn irresistibly to him. Ashamed as they were to tell so pure a man of their wicked deeds, they preferred to tell him above all other men, for they knew his heart; they knew that while he hated their sins he loved the poor sinners. They knew that he was the sinner's friend; that they could go to him assured that they would get more sympathy from him and that he would do more for them than anyone else they knew. And he never failed them. Some of the best and most useful men in America to-day owe all that they are, under God, to the sympathy of "Old Mang," the boys' friend, who at a certain moment in their lives when they were turning into the downward path, put his arm around them and turned them around and got the difficulties out of their way and gave them a new start upward again.

"Old Mang" was the sinner's friend for the community in which he lived. I get a like impression of Jesus. Jesus is the sinner's friend for the whole world. He is not their comrade or chum, but their friend. "Old Mang" was never seen in the company of bad boys when they were doing wrong. When he was among them they were doing their level best. But he was a friend in need. He was the friend to whom they could go when they were compelled to have a friend.

And so it is with Jesus. He has no sympathy with men in their sins. He does not look lightly upon men's sins. But His heart is full of yearning toward men *because of their sins*. He has a peculiar tenderness for the fellow who has gone wrong and who is in need of a friend. He has a peculiar sympathy—the deepest sympathy of all—for the ostracised sinner—the man or woman upon whom the world has turned its back.

VI

These glimpses of Jesus cover only a very small part of his life, but they are sufficient for our present purpose. Now let us pause a moment and ask, "What do I think of Him?" "How do I feel about Him?"

Let us not be afraid to consult our feelings or impressions. Of course our feelings have no part in any effort to get at material facts. We don't consult our impressions when we are facing a problem in geometry or trying to get at the species of a strange bug, but we do consult them—we must consult them—when we are trying to get at the soul or spirit of a thing, whether it is a poem, a painting, an oratorio, a man, or the Great Spirit Himself. The student who holds himself rigidly to a scientific study of the Gospels, refusing to take account of anything beyond what he sees with his intellectual vision, shuts himself off from all possibility of getting at the spirit of Jesus—at the

divine Christ in Jesus—just as effectually as the student who holds himself rigidly to a scientific study of a poem, or painting, or oratorio, or a Washington, a Lincoln or a Lee, shuts himself off from all possibility of getting at the spirit of a poem, or painting, or oratorio, or a Washington, a Lincoln or a Lee.

When I began to consult my impressions of Jesus I noticed a very striking difference between the impressions I got in reading the Gospels and those which come to me in reading the biography of a great man. In reading a biography I would pause now and then and say to myself, "Here is true greatness." But now and then I would come upon something that would give my enthusiasm a rude shock and I would say, "What a pity that so great a character should be disfigured by such a weakness!" But in reading the Gospels I do not get either of these impressions. I do not think that anyone who takes the story of Jesus to a quiet spot just to get at His mind and spirit, ever gets an impression of mere human greatness, and certainly he does not get an impression of human weakness. Always my own impressions, instead of swinging back and forth between greatness and weakness as they do in reading a biography, swing back and forth between humanness and divineness. I wonder if this has not been your experience! I wonder if as we have been reviewing His life you have not found yourself saying, "How human! How wonderfully human!" And I wonder if,

while the thought of his humanness was still in your mind—I wonder if something has not brought you up now and then with a jerk and made you exclaim, “That is not human; that is divine!”

No matter how far you go in the life of Jesus, if you read it in the way I have suggested, you are likely to get these two impressions. And nearly always you will get them very close together. Yonder He is lying in the bottom of a boat so heavy with sleep that a terrific storm does not disturb Him. “How human!” you exclaim. Another moment and He is standing upright in the little rocking craft speaking to the raging storm just as man speaks to a little dog that is jumping up at him in play. (Someone I believe has translated it in these terms. Not “Peace be still,” but “Down! Be quiet.”) And when you hear that voice you exclaim, “That is not human; that is divine!” In nearly all the stories we have of Jesus we get, first a glimpse of the human and next a glimpse of the divine. Look for them, especially in the last scenes: the Last Supper; Gethsemane; Calvary, and the last Resurrection story as we have it in the Gospel by John. Everywhere in the Gospels Jesus is telling us that He is human. Everywhere He is telling us that He is divine.

IV
AN UNINTENTIONAL CARICATURE
OF JESUS

I

THE picture of a Jesus who was "without form or comeliness" apparently had its origin in the earnest desire of the Early Christian Fathers to convince their Jewish hearers that the Jesus whom they preached conformed in every particular to the Messiah of the prophets. It was a blunder born of the best intentions, and it does not seem to have done any serious harm except that in all ages it has been a source of pain and perplexity to devoted followers of Jesus, who could no more understand how the Supreme Lover of men could be ugly than a little child could understand how a loving mother could be ugly.

But in recent years we have been offered, with equally good intentions, a conception of Jesus which is a far more serious blunder, and I do not feel that I should pass from the subject of His personal appearance without speaking a very frank word concerning it. I refer to the picture which has come to be known as the "Athletic Christ," a conception which had its origin in the

commendable desire to offset (especially for the benefit of young men) the evil effects of the so-called effeminate pictures of Jesus which have been handed down to us from the past, by presenting a view of Him which would emphasise the heroic aspects of His character.

This view represents Jesus as a big, brawny-armed, happy-hearted, carefree athlete, who went forth to His daily task swinging his arms hilariously, and so full of the sheer joy of living that the woods and fields rang with His shouts and laughter.

The best that can be said for this effort to make Jesus attractive to young men is that it attracts. It has attracted young men to Jesus as a hero, but I have yet to learn that they found anything but a hero when they came. In other words, it helps young men to believe in Jesus, but only in a human Jesus. There is nothing in an athletic Christ to make a young man fall on his knees before Him. College boys may ride a football hero on their shoulders, and in a frenzy of admiration may imitate him down to the matter of wearing his brand of neckties, but they will not bend the knee to him. Moreover, when they have grown a little older they will smile at the youthful enthusiasm which led them to exalt physical muscle above mind and spirit, and athletic achievement above the things that are eternally worth while.

I have no great admiration for the imaginative portraits of Jesus which have come down to us,

but I hardly think that the fight which is now being made against them is justified by the facts. It has been assumed that our fathers thought of Jesus as effeminate, else they would not have painted Him as "a woman with a beard." As a matter of fact they did not paint Him as "a woman with a beard." For the last twenty-five or thirty years we have been doing our thinking about man, not in the terms of Jesus, but in the terms which were common among the ancient Greeks, when those remarkable people were exalting physical perfection as the glory, if not the chief end of man. We have put the physical so far above the intellectual and spiritual that we no longer see the incongruity of handing an athlete a hundred thousand dollars for a week's engagement and then turning and offering a college professor or a minister less than one-twentieth of that amount for all he can do in a year. It is true that we have magnified the physical in the name of health, but we are compelled to admit that the human body which has come to be the world's ideal is not a healthy body, but an athletic body.

The mediæval masters who painted the imaginative pictures of Jesus we have to-day, did not have this ideal. They were not impressed with the glory of brawny arms or muscular jaws, and when they came to paint His face they were thinking of Him, not as an example of physical perfection, but as an example of spiritual perfection. It was only natural that in their efforts to put in His face

the spiritual light and all the charming things of the spirit which they thought should be there, they should be indifferent to those elements which enter into what this athletic-loving generation has come to think of as a strong face. And it is quite as natural that when one who is obsessed with the athletic ideal looks upon these pictures and sees no indication of high physical development, he should at once put them down as effeminate. Unquestionably the face, as we have it, is far from strong, but if the present generation had as great an appreciation of the spiritual as it has of the physical, I am, not sure we would think of it as effeminate. Rather, I am inclined to think that we would ask whether the old masters did not come nearer the truth than we have? It is plain that the gentler traits in Jesus were developed to a remarkable degree; but one cannot but notice that they are all traits of strong characters. He had, for example, a motherly tenderness—a trait that is found among truly great souls, but never among weaklings. A weak man may be “sissy”; he is never motherly. And we know that nothing is easier than for one who is obsessed with the athletic ideal to mistake motherliness for “sissiness.” Possibly that is what we have done in the present instance.

I think we can safely say that most of the imaginative pictures of Jesus which have come down to us are not representations of an effeminate Jesus, but are simply the more or less successful

results of efforts to show a face in which the life of the spirit has done the moulding rather than the life of the flesh.

But admitting that these pictures are far from ideal—and they are—it does not follow that our modern pictures of an athletic Christ come any nearer the truth. On the contrary, while the old pictures fall short of it, the new clearly contradict it. To conceive of Jesus as a man of the athletic type and spirit we must not only ignore a large part of the story of His life, but we must question at least one of the best established facts of human experience. We can easily imagine a great man starting in life with an athletic body and a fondness for athletic sports, but we cannot conceive of him as having the spirit which we usually associate with the athlete. Nor can we imagine that he will continue athletic in body many months if he is a man of boundless sympathies and chooses a life in which he must necessarily share every hour in the day the sufferings and sorrows of his fellow-men.

It is not difficult to imagine that Jesus entered upon His career with a strong, perfectly healthy body, but if one will read the Gospels, not to prove a theory but simply to saturate himself with His mind and spirit, one will find it a pretty severe strain upon his imagination to fall in with the idea that He came to His work with the hilarious, joy-riding spirit which we have come to associate with our most popular heroes. And

granting that He came to His work with the strength of an athlete, it is impossible, in the light of what we know of His life, to believe that it remained with Him for any considerable length of time. I happen to know a Christlike man—an ineffably beautiful spirit of great power—who is as big and strong as an athlete, and is a lover of athletic sports, though he devotes little time to them. This man is sometimes pointed out as an argument for an athletic Christ, but he has nothing whatever in common with the hilarious, care-free, joy-riding spirit which our champions of an athletic Christ associate with Jesus. To those who know his boundless sympathies, nothing is plainer than that if he were to be called to a work in which he would live in sight of suffering and sorrow all the day long, the ceaseless drain upon his sympathies as he went about sharing the pains and griefs of his fellow-men would soon wear down his system and his muscular strength until the sheer joy of physical living would disappear, and he would have neither the strength nor the desire for athletic sports of any kind.

The compassion of Jesus reached a depth quite beyond anything the world had ever known. It poured out of His heart in a ceaseless stream, and He never attempted to hold it back. Not once in the story of His career do we find him steeling Himself against the sight of suffering, as the physician is compelled to do to save his strength for his work. Every day, and almost every hour of

the day, He was surrounded by a people whose wretchedness and misery can hardly be conceived by the modern Western mind. Everywhere we see Him sharing the pains and griefs of men who had known little but pain and grief. Everywhere He is putting His shoulder beneath the burden of sin that is crushing the very life-blood out of the hearts of men. Turn the leaves of His story slowly and look closely: Where will you find in it—anywhere—a breathing chance for an athletic Christ?

If any of you who have experienced the horrors of complete nervous prostration will read with an open mind the story of the sufferings of Jesus in Gethsemane, and then recall the horrible sensations which overwhelmed you at the beginning of your illness, I think you will close the book with the conviction that you have been looking upon a Man who had shared the suffering and sorrows and sin-burdens of his fellow-men until He had spent the last ounce of His strength, and was tottering on the verge of a complete nervous collapse. In three short years He had spent himself unto death for men, and it is easy to believe as we read of His anguish, that without help from above His spirit could hardly have pulled His exhausted body the rest of the way.

II

These frenzied efforts to make Jesus over to fit the needs or fancied needs of a particular period,

or sex, or situation, are not helping Christians on to a clearer or more satisfying conception of the real Christ, neither are they encouraging the outside world to take Him seriously. Moreover, the demand for such a Christ is a selfish cry, and heaven has yet to answer that kind of a cry. It would be indeed a strange God who would send into the world a Christ peculiarly suited to the needs of young men, so long as there were middle-aged men and old men and young women and middle-aged women and old women and little children who are just as much in need of Christ as they are. Moreover, the whole idea is utterly repugnant to every serious-minded young man who has thought it over. Youth does not want to be subsidised for Christian service. It does not ask for special privileges in anything. Besides, one who is just starting in life is already beginning to see that the life that is looming up before him grows in seriousness and difficulty, and if he is interested in Christ at all, he is interested in a Christ who will continue to meet his needs further on when he gets into the thickest of the fight. And if he has listened, as a thoughtful young man will, to men who have got a little further along on the road, he will realise that his tastes and needs and many of his ideals will change in a few years, and that what appeals to him with peculiar force to-day, may utterly fail to interest him five years to come.

A burnt child should dread the fire. We have

just made an experiment in revising religion to suit a particular need, and we know how that works. A few years ago a great cry went up for a work-day religion. We had decided that what we humans needed was a religion that would help a man behind the counter and in the shop, and many of us revised our religion accordingly; we cut out everything except service. It never occurred to us that the most trying moments of life—the moments which require the largest reinforcements of moral and spiritual strength—when our whole being is crying out for unlimited supplies of vital force, courage, love, faith, patience—are not the moments in which we are absorbed in the day's task, whether the task be for ourselves or for others, but the moments when we are not doing anything at all; that the average man is far better equipped to work at his job than he is to play the man when he is thinking over what he has done or what he wants to do, or when he is on his way home thinking of nothing in particular, but with his eyes and ears open to every evil suggestion along the way, or when he is sitting at the dinner table confronted by a nerve-worn wife, a crying child, a burnt lamb-chop, and a plumber's bill at the side of his plate.

But we have learned our lesson. Nowhere in America to-day do I find a vestige of the frenzy for a work-day religion that was sweeping over the country ten years ago. People have not returned to the old-time emphasis upon a religion to

die by, but they have turned with utter weariness from a religion that simply points out their job and tells them to go to work. They want a religion that will help them to live as well as work; to love as well as serve; to be something as well as do something; to play the man in the exigencies of life; to stand back and lose rather than go forward over the bodies of their fellow-men to win; to live with God as their Father and with their fellow-men as their brothers, not only in active service, but in love and trust; and having lived as well as served, to die as nobly as they have lived.

The Jesus of the Gospels and of human experience is not a fractional Christ designed to meet the needs of a fraction of humanity, any more than His religion is a fractional religion, designed to meet the needs of a fraction of our daily life. If this be true, we shall never get anywhere in our quest of Jesus so long as we search the Gospels with an eye to special privilege. We can no more understand the real Jesus while we are demanding a Christ especially suited to the peculiar needs of our age, our sex, or our time of life, than we can understand Him while demanding a Christ designed to be the exclusive property of a one hundred per cent. American.

WHAT WE SEE IN HIM THAT DRAWS US

I

WE like to assure ourselves that our faith in Jesus is the result of a careful study of the facts. It is pleasant to think that we believe because we have faithfully sifted out and weighed the facts of His life and have found that they are all in His favour. But as a matter of fact, we came to believe in Him in the way that we came to believe in the best men and women we have known. No matter how faithfully we study the facts about a man, we never really believe in him—never come to the point where we are ready to risk our all upon him—until we have come to know the real man himself. And we never know a man until we know his spirit—until something happens that brings our spirits face to face with his spirit.

There is Jones, your business neighbour downtown. You have been saying that you have known Jones for twenty years. You have been with him so often that you are as familiar with the material facts about him as you are with the facts about your own business. You could even make a close guess at the number of freckles on his face. Last

week you went with him on a fishing trip down the river. You had never been with him alone before. One quiet morning, as you sat together in the little boat, the fish refused to bite, and you began to talk. You said something about business, but somehow it seemed out of place, and you fell back into silence. Then Jones said something about politics, with the same result. At last, under the spell of the stillness, you began to talk of the things that a man thinks of only when his mind has emptied itself of the sordid, blinding materialities of life, and, before you were aware of it, you were uncovering your very soul to Jones. And soon Jones was uncovering his very soul to you. And suddenly you found yourself face to face with the *real* Jones. Until that moment you only knew the facts about Jones; now at last you knew Jones. Yesterday you came home, and last night you said to your wife: "I made a discovery down the river last week."

"What was it?" she asked.

"I discovered Jones."

"Why, I thought you had known him for twenty years."

"I thought so, too," you replied, "but I was mistaken. I know him now."

This is the secret of the method we have been trying. Unquestionably "Old Mang" was right. No matter how faithfully we may study the facts about a man, we never get at the truth about him—we never know the real man himself—until we

know his spirit; and we never know his spirit until we come to a quiet place with him where our spirits can catch a vision of his spirit. And no matter how carefully we may analyse the Gospels to get at the material facts about Jesus, we do not find the divine Christ until we go beyond the material facts about Jesus and try to catch a vision of Jesus Himself. And if I may judge from my own experience, the surest way to do this is to suspend our analytical studies now and then and seek a quiet spot where we can rid our minds and hearts of all material interests and then drink in or meditate upon the story of Jesus as a whole, solely for the purpose of getting at and saturating ourselves with His mind and spirit.

II

Now let us continue this method and see if we cannot get a little closer to Him. Whenever I make an effort to get at the spirit of Jesus in this way, I find myself strangely drawn towards Him as by a magnet. This soon ceases to be strange when I look to see what it is that is drawing me and discover that every feature of His character is magnetic. There was a time when I thought I saw in Him several things which were far from charming, but this was due to certain misinterpretations of which I shall speak later.

Always I am drawn first by His unique love. Not His love, but His unique love. I must have acquired the idea of the uniqueness of His love at

a very tender age. Jesus was like my mother and my mother's love was something different from other people's. Everybody loved me when I was good, but my mother loved me when I was bad. I think it was the consciousness of her love when I was bad, rather than the thought of my badness, that so often broke my heart. Everybody took pleasure in doing things for me, but my mother delighted in doing the things that cost her most. She was never happier than when she had a chance to deny herself for me, or was suffering for my sake. I knew that if a famine should overtake the world and my mother should have only one little, dry crust left, she would thrust that little crust into my hand and smile upon me as I ate it every bit. I knew that if I were about to die with diphtheria and my mother could take it and die in my stead, she would gladly do it. As for forgiving me for doing wrong, that was as natural and easy to her as smiling.

And Jesus I was sure was like my mother. Years afterwards, when I began to read my Bible I found that I was right; Jesus did not love as other people loved. We love the lovable; that is nothing; Jesus loved the unlovable. We love the worthy; anybody can do that; Jesus loved the unworthy. If you want to see the most marvellous thing that ever came into the heart of man, look at that strange tenderness in the face of Jesus when He is talking to a fallen woman. That feeling He had for the poor woman of the street makes

the average man shudder. It makes the average woman stand aghast; she says it is against nature. But it is not anti-natural. Now and then we come upon it in the heart of a man or a woman who is saturated with the spirit of Jesus, and we don't try to account for it on natural grounds. We say it is the spirit of Jesus. When I look at Jesus as He is talking to a fallen woman, and then turn and look at Him upon the Cross, and then turn again and look at Him as He is taking back the eleven disciples who had forsaken Him, I feel that I am looking upon something that is not of this world. It is not anti-natural but it is supernatural. It is beyond human. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you that ye also love one another." I never saw anything new in that commandment until I realised that the love of Jesus was a unique love.

Think a moment of what this vision of a sacrificial love which Jesus pointed out to us—pointed out in Himself—has done for the world. When Jesus came, the world was in a state of collapse. It had collapsed so completely that hardly anybody was conscious of it. It had practically ceased to struggle. A general dry rot had spread over the nations. There was peace, but it was the peace of listlessness, of utter weariness. Nobody had enough ambition or hope or energy to fight. The race had drunk its cup to the dregs and found nothing worth while. It was dying for want of a

new stimulant. No wonder so many in that day turned to the deadly hemlock as the easiest way out.

What was the secret of it all? We have it in one word—selfishness. It was the cup of selfishness that the race had drunk to the dregs. Mankind had gone the limit of self-seeking and self-indulgence. I wish we could realise what this means. Selfish as we are, to-day, I doubt if it be possible for us to fathom the selfishness of the human heart in the ancient world. In a day when life was worth so little that suicide had ceased to attract attention, it was still true that all that a man had would he give for his life. The supreme duty of man was to look out for self. The idea of putting others ahead of one's self was practically unheard of. Even the Hebrews, after ages of religious teaching, had got no further than the idea of putting God ahead of self. They believed in helping the other fellow under certain limitations, but they never dreamed of putting the other fellow first. Of course, there were exceptions to the rule, but it is safe to say that when Jesus came, a man who would seriously inconvenience himself for his fellow-men was exceedingly rare.

The race had tried out selfishness and had found nothing in it. It had found that he that will save his life shall lose it; and there it had stopped, weary, discouraged, utterly hopeless. Nobody dreamed of trying anything else; nobody knew of anything else to try.

What was it that started the race off again? What was it that aroused men and women here and there, and caused them to spring to their feet with a new light in their eyes and start off with a shout and a bound to scale the heavenly heights?

First of all, it was a vision of Christ's sacrificial love and the call of that love to follow. Next it was the programme of sacrificial love which He gave to those who turned to follow Him. We have forgotten this part of it. We have forgotten that when Jesus came and quickened men's spirits He opened their eyes and hearts to a new idea, a new programme, a new life. We have forgotten that when He spoke to them He held up before them the most powerful appeal that He has ever made to the best that is in men. We have forgotten that He challenged the heroic spirit that was in them. "You have been living for self," He said, "counting your life dear unto yourself. That is not like the Father; that is not like the Son. That is like the heathen—the heathen who live with the cattle that perish. There is a better way. Look!" And He pointed them to the star of sacrifice—rather to the Cross, which meant sacrifice. He who is bent upon saving his life like the cattle that perish, shall perish with the cattle. He who refuses to save his life, who is ready to lose it in a heroic passion for God and his fellow-men shall save it forever. We have forgotten that this thrilling appeal came from the lips of a hero whose every

deed inspired men to be heroic, who was continually giving His life for the life of men.

We have forgotten that. And by the way, have we also forgotten that so long as the heroic age of Christianity lasted, so long as the followers of Jesus followed Him in heroic sacrifice, the race advanced steadily toward its divine goal, and that in two hundred years it made more progress toward spiritual manhood than it had made in all the previous millenniums of its history? Have we forgotten that the moment the wonderful love of the early Christians for Christ and humanity, which Jesus Himself inspired, began to decline and they began to look out for themselves like other people—have we forgotten that at that very moment the race began to go down again, that it went down until it lay prone upon the earth, and that it was not until the passion for sacrifice came again to Christ's people that men again struggled to their feet and the Dark Ages came to an end?

III

Of course we do not catch the greatest vision—the all-powerful vision—of sacrificial love until we come to the Cross. To me, c-r-o-s-s is just another way of spelling “love” when love reaches the limit. That is, when love reaches the limit in the heart, when it goes to the limit in sacrifice, when it spreads out to the limit of another's need.

That is what the Crucifixion means to me: it is a picture of Supreme Love having its way and doing its work to the furthest limit.

The Cross tells me of a love so great that it completely fills the greatest of all hearts. It is a love that could not be bigger or stronger or more enduring; a love that is unto the uttermost and unto the end. I cannot conceive that even Jesus could have loved men more than He did when he went to His death.

Of course, when I think of His love as reaching the furthest limit in His heart, it is easy for me to think of His death as love going to the limit in sacrifice for others. But, somehow, we seldom think of the vast sweep of the Master's love nowadays, and so we seldom think of His death as a sacrifice for others at all. It ought to go without saying that all love that reaches the limit in the heart goes to the limit in sacrifice. Yet in everyday life we talk one moment of the duty of loving God and our fellow-men with all our hearts, and the next moment proceed to notify our friends that we believe in sacrifice, but only within reasonable bounds. We will go so far but no further. We will do our part but no more. And we never see the incongruity of it. The world has always managed to soothe its conscience with a fractional sacrifice. It is willing to go a certain distance; it does not understand why it should go the whole way. It is willing to do its part, but it insists

upon leaving the rest that others may do their part also. The world could never have given us the Master's picture of the Good Samaritan. It would have had him bind up the poor fellow's wounds and perhaps carry him to a place of safety; and then it would have had him say: "Now my good fellow, I've done my part and if others who come this way will do theirs, you will be safe at home before night."

The Cross tells me that it exists to-day because of a love that went to the limit for others. It reminds me that if the love of Jesus had given out one step short of the limit there would have been no Cross. If Jesus had said that He was willing to do His part, that He was willing to make any sacrifice within reason, He would have stopped short of death and His sacrifice would have been worthless. It was because Jesus took the last step to the grave, that we have the Cross and all that the Cross means to us.

But this is not all. The death of Jesus tells me of a love that spreads out to the furthest limit of my deepest need. There was a time when our theological controversies over the Cross gave me no end of trouble; but that day has passed. If I find myself beginning to worry over one of those old questions I have only to reflect that the death of Jesus was Supreme Love going to the limit, and that if it went to the limit it could not fall short of the limit of my deepest need.

IV

Before we turn away from the Cross, let me remind you that we are standing at the source of this vast stream of passion for humanity which is to-day sweeping over the world, and without which, nothing short of a miracle could have pulled the world through the last dozen years. We have been thinking of our passion for humanity as a new discovery. We speak of it as something that came into being a few years ago, since we began to develop a social conscience. We are quite sure that our fathers knew nothing of it. But we have been misled by appearances. I am unable to see anywhere to-day greater evidences of a passion for humanity than I saw in my youth. The only difference I can see is in its forms of expression. Our fathers and mothers certainly had as much of this holy fire in them as we have, but they had not learned the art of organisation and each did his work in his own way, and their individual efforts were necessarily so limited in their sweep that they did not attract any attention. It was like the business of those simple days. Every man was in business for himself, and ten thousand owners of small stores did their work in their limited sphere without attracting half as much attention as the head of a single big business organisation attracts to-day.

Our passion for humanity is not a modern idea; only our organisation for making it more effective

is modern. It was not education, it was not even love in its usual sense, that started it. It was a sacrificial love—the love the world discovered when it looked upon the Cross.

The world caught its first vision of a passion for humanity in Christ. Among good men there had always been a compassion for the needy, and here and there men's hearts were swept with a passion for their nation, and once in a long while, a man had appeared with a consuming passion for God; but there is nothing to show that the world ever heard of a passion for mankind until it was discovered in the face of Jesus. Buddha had shown a great passion for the light which he brought, and no doubt he had a great compassion for men whom he found stumbling in darkness; but there is no indication that he was ever under the compulsion of that divine, all-inclusive, consuming love that makes a man willing to lay down his life for people he has never seen.

Here at last was something new under the sun.

It was not only something different, but it had the power to make everything else different. And the moment men discovered it they began to be different. Before they looked into the face of Christ they stood aloof from humanity and contented themselves with dropping small coins into the hands of the needy; now they began to come closer and to take the needy by the hand. They came closer, not only because they recognised their kinship with one another, but because their

hearts were swept by this new and wonderful passion. They had no sooner discovered it in the heart of Christ than it had seized upon their own hearts and swept them together. When people are on fire they are bound to come together. And those early Christians were ablaze with the greatest passion the human heart had ever known. Rather it was a double passion; it embraced both humanity and the Christ of humanity. With such a flame in their hearts they simply could not stay apart. They had to come together, not only for humanity's sake but for Christ's sake. And when they came together they had to put their heads as well as their hearts together. They had to put their heads close together over the wonderful programme for helping their fellow-men which Christ had given them. What could interest them so much as that marvellous plan which provided for their co-operation with Him in the work of rescuing fellow-humans from the death of sin and transforming them into men for his Kingdom?

When men who are on fire for Christ and humanity put their heads and hearts together over Christ's programme for humanity we know what is going to happen. It is bound to happen. It is impossible to conceive of those disciples coming together over the programme of Jesus and then letting it all end in nothing but a prayer meeting. They had to get up and go to work. And they had to work according to the programme of sacrificial love which Jesus had given them.

Let us not forget that. Let us not forget that they carried with them a programme. With all their enthusiasm for Christ and humanity they would not have stood together long enough to accomplish anything if Christ had not given them a definite programme. As it was they knew exactly what they were expected to do and they knew exactly how to go about it. There was nothing mysterious about it and there was no confusion. They knew what they were to do while waiting for the order to start, and when the order came they knew exactly which way to go. And they went. They didn't fumble or flounder. They went.

And they went with tremendous enthusiasm. They had made wonderful discoveries and they had all the fire that wonderful discoveries kindle, and something more. They had discovered Christ and they had discovered humanity and they had discovered a new calling—a wonderful calling: they had discovered that the supreme business of life was to co-operate with Christ in the loving, sacrificial task of turning human beings into real men for the Kingdom of God. And they sprang to their work as men spring up a ladder to rescue little children from a burning building. One man pressed forward with such passion and power that if he could have gone on for a hundred years the whole world would have heard his wonderful message.

And the whole story of this wonderful thing is a story of sacrificial love, born of a vision of the sacrificial love of Jesus.

VI

OTHER IMPRESSIONS OF THE MAN HIMSELF

I

NO doubt the first thing I saw in Jesus that drew me to Him was His unique love. I am almost as sure that the next thing was His purity; that is, purity as a child would understand the term. My mother had a face that the world called immaculate. She looked like one into whose soul no speck of sin had ever found its way. No one could have ever convinced her friends that she ever told a fib, that she ever kept back part of the truth, that she ever carried the slightest trace of insincerity in her heart. If it were a question of lying or dying, they knew that she would choose to die. She taught me that I must never use a single word that I could not utter in her presence, and I seriously doubt whether from her childhood up she ever uttered a word that she could not utter in her son's presence. She had such a horror of impure speech that her children caught it from her, and to this day, although I somehow escaped having my mouth washed out with soap and water for saying

a bad word, there are times when I can almost taste the soap!

Years afterwards, when I came upon Jesus in my Bible, I found that the conviction of my early years that Jesus was pure like my mother was true. When I looked upon Him as He appeared to me in the Gospels, I could not imagine the tiniest speck of sin having ever touched His soul. And I knew if it came to a question of lying or dying He would die.

Later when I began to dip into ancient literature I got a wider vision of His immaculateness. This suggests a subject that is too disagreeable to speak about, but if those of you who are familiar with certain unspeakably vile ancient Greek stories which students are supposed to read, will place one of these stories by the side of the Gospels and note the contrast, you will understand what I have in mind.

But the immaculateness of Jesus never meant as much to me as it does to-day, or rather as it has since the present horrible tidal wave of impurity began to sweep over the world. When, heartsick over some new revelation of vileness, I turn toward Him and get a vision of His snow-whiteness, I find my heart crying out, "O Blessed Spirit, give to this generation a vision of the Holy, Holy, Holy One that will cause men to cry out as did the prophet in the Temple, 'Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips.'

"O Master, this hour will I write purity upon

my brow, purity upon my lips, purity upon my heart; and I will follow Thee, the pure, immaculate Christ, forever!"

II

There were other winsome traits—such as gentleness, patience, fellow-feeling,—which I recognised in Jesus in my childhood, but these I had learned to associate with all good people and they made no unusual impression upon me. So far as I can now recall, I did not discover anything else in Him that drew me, either in my childhood or youth, or indeed as a man, until, as I have said, I came to see that my method of Bible study, which consisted in merely analysing a verse or chapter or book, yielded nothing but material facts, and that to get at the truth—at the soul of a passage, its real message to my soul—I must follow analysis with synthesis—put the thing I had picked to pieces together again and try to grasp it or, “drink it in” as a whole. When I began to do this—when, after analysing the story of Jesus, I undertook to go beyond the material facts about Jesus to get at His mind and spirit—to get at Jesus Himself—I found that my vision of Him, which had long remained unchanged, had again begun to widen, and I was getting glimpses of traits that I had never seen before. Some of these traits were so strange that they startled me before they drew me.

I am ashamed to say how old I was before it occurred to me that Jesus was—well, there is no word for it unless we call it “motherly.” I have already, in a passing reference to His motherly tenderness, reminded you that this is a trait of strong characters and is never found among weaklings. A weak man may be a “sissy”; he is never motherly. And Jesus was motherly. A mother’s sense of proprietorship, combined with her sense of responsibility and her love, develops a providential attitude toward her children which eventually extends beyond them to every human being in sight who needs mothering. Jesus had that attitude. I wish you would turn the leaves of the Gospels slowly and notice His motherly way of looking at people. Here is an instance I have already mentioned in another connection. He is looking upon a great crowd of hard-driven, weary, burdened, heartsick toilers; men who need mothering. And just as a mother stretches out her arms to a tired, discouraged child, and says, “Come to mother,” this Man stretches out His arms toward that great tired, discouraged throng and says, “Come unto me. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Here is another. He is scanning the faces of His disciples. They are all tired and nerve-worn. They need a day off in a quiet place. And He does for them just what a thoughtful mother would do. He plans a day off. “Let us go apart and rest awhile.”

He had a mother's way of standing up for her own when they are criticised. He had a mother's way of anticipating the wants of others. Here He is, looking out over a great throng of weary people. He has just noticed that the sun is about to set. He remembers that they are far from home, and He says to Himself, "It will not do to send them away hungry; they must have their supper." And He gives them their supper.

Again we see Him standing on the seashore as the day begins to dawn, looking at the dim forms of His disciples in the distance. "Boys," he cries, "have you caught any fish?" No, they have had a bad night and have caught nothing. The boys must have their fish, and He sees to that. And then it occurs to Him that they will come ashore wet, and cold, and hungry, and miserable, and He says to Himself, "The boys must have their breakfast." And when the boys come ashore breakfast is ready!

I have said that this is a trait of strong characters, never of weaklings. Paul had it. Watch him as he comes ashore on the morning of the wreck. It is cold, and the natives have been thoughtful enough to build a fire on the beach. And the poor shivering castaways are all crouching around the fire. Paul is as wet and cold and wretched as the rest, but as he comes up, a glance at the fire tells him that it will not last long, and he hurries off down the beach, and presently comes back with an armful of bits of wood to replenish

it. I don't think it was in Saul of Tarsus to do that; it must have come to him later on, when he was becoming saturated with the spirit of Christ.

III

Always thinking of others! Always anticipating the wants of others, never giving a thought to self. How like a mother! That was Jesus. There is no friend like a mother, except Jesus and those who are filled with His spirit. See the length to which His friendship will go! There was no need to which His heart did not respond. And it had to respond with something more than tears or words. He could not weep over a poor fellow who was in trouble and dry his eyes and turn away satisfied with Himself because he had shown His sympathy for him. He had to do something; He had to lend a hand.

Notice his boundless compassion for enslaved people. His heart was continually going out to men and women who were held down. He was always breaking the chains that bound people. How earnestly and persistently did He seek to deliver people whose minds were enslaved by the tyranny of the rabbis. And He was always delivering people from the slavery of sin. He could always be depended upon to take sides with the oppressed against the oppressor.

Jesus was, and is, the world's greatest emancipator. His heart goes out to every man, woman

and child who is bound down, whether in soul, mind or body. Those heathen religions which recognise sin look forward to distant ages when a man may gradually free himself from its entanglements. But Jesus breaks the bonds here and now. He breaks all sorts of evil bonds. He is ready to free us to-day from every entanglement of sin. He will not only break the bond which keeps our hands tied when they ought to serve; He will break the chain that binds a man to a deadly vice. And surely He is ready to have us break the bonds of ignorance and tyranny that are cheating so many millions of people out of their chance to rise to spiritual manhood in the Kingdom of God!

What a wonderful record he has as a friend! It is pleasant to think that we do not have to wait for Him to prove either His friendship or His power. He has already done all the things for others that I need to have done for me, and it is the testimony of all men who have seen His work that He has done these things well.

If He has done them well for others, He can do them well for me. If my hearing is still dull—if I am slow to hear the voice of God and slow to understand His will, I must go to Him; for He doeth all things well. If I hesitate in speech—if I fail to speak the word of comfort, of inspiration, of admonition, of encouragement which I ought to speak, I must go to Him; it is His will that I should have freedom of utterance, and He doeth

all things well. If I fail to see God's truth clearly, if I fail to discern the path of duty, if I am blind to passing opportunities, if my soul is weak for want of food, if I have a demon of vice lurking in me, if I am still almost dead in sin, I must go to Him; for He is my friend and he would not have me stumble in the dark, or miss the way, or starve along the way. He wants me to have life and to have it more abundantly. He wants me to follow in His steps. He wants me to be like Him. If I will put myself in His hands, He will make me like Him. He is a friend indeed, and He will not be content until He has moulded me in His own image.

IV

A well-developed mind seems to automatically take care of itself. It has its own ways of preserving its balance and its clearness of perception. For example, if the mind has dwelt upon a gentle trait of Jesus, it will naturally turn for contrast or change to a stronger trait. If you force your mind from one gentle trait to another, and another, and continue on that side too long, it will lose its normal balance and it will give you distorted pictures of Jesus.

I have intimated that it was at a comparatively late period of life that I got my first glimpse of what I have called the motherliness of Jesus. It was at quite as late a period that I caught my first glimpse of His heroism. I am ashamed to confess

it, though I am aware that it is not an unusual experience. I have been amazed in recent years at the number of persons one meets who frankly confess that they have never thought of Jesus as a hero. One comes upon strong, middle-aged men—good men—who think of Him very much as they think of an aged mother. If a man's mother lived to a great age the picture which he carries in his memory is not of his mother in the midst of life, but of mother as she appeared when she had retired from active life. A dear old saint of fourscore or more, her sweet, thin face enveloped in an ineffable calm, sitting in her easy chair, her open Bible in her lap, her long, thin, blue-veined hands resting upon it—that is the picture. There she sits all the day long, now reading a bit, now knitting a bit, now nodding a bit, now thinking of kind things to say about mean people—bless her heart!—never raising her voice in protest against anything in the world except little Johnny's cruel custom of sticking pins in flies. That is Mother.

Do not think I am making light of mothers. If there is a human being I come near worshipping it is a noble mother. But a man thinks of his own mother as the best Christian he knows, and as she must be like Christ, Christ must be like her. And this man whose mother lived to a great age forgets that the picture that he has in mind is the picture not of Mother as she was in the midst of life when she was fighting her battles, but of his mother retired from active life, her battles over,

her strength all gone. Mother in the midst of life was no non-resister; she was a fighter, and the bravest of the brave. I do not wonder that the man who turns from his mother as she was in her heroic days to worship at the shrine of his aged mother, whose battles are over, whose strength is all gone—I do not wonder that he has a hard time trying to conceive of Jesus as a hero.

Others have quite as hard a time because of their reverence for certain aged methods of Bible study, which, unlike our dear old mothers, have never deserved our reverence. I remember how, in my boyhood, when I religiously took every word of Jesus literally without regard to what He was talking about—I remember how sorry I was that Jesus said that He was meek and lowly in heart. I thought of meekness as weakness, and I despised meek people. Uriah Heep was meek. That old whining hypocrite across the street was meek. That poor trembling soul in the alley who was ready to lie down in the road and let the whole world run over her was meek. I could not believe that Jesus was one of those weak things, but the Bible said He was meek, and there I was! I had always found him to be like my mother, and my mother was not one of those meek things. My mother was a fighter, the greatest fighter I ever knew. She would fight dirt, she would fight the devil, she would fight all the evil forces that were trying to get into her home after her children, she would fight for her children, and some-

I had always found Him to be like my mother, a switch! And yet she loved to tell me that Jesus was meek!

v

I was a full-grown man before it dawned upon me that when Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek," He was speaking, not of the weak, but of the strong. He had in mind what we call nowadays the spirit of the true gentleman. Blessed is the man of gentlemanly spirit—the man who has such a regard for his fellow-men, that when he sees a chance of winning the earth and others are rushing in to get there first, rather than run roughshod over them to get ahead of them, will stand back like a true gentleman and lose his chance.

But someone will ask, "Does not the prophet say, 'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth'?" Certainly, but that is not a picture of the Messiah's life; that is a picture of the Messiah offering Himself in sacrifice. Jesus came to drink the cup of suffering to the dregs and then to drink the dregs, and when the time came for His supreme sacrifice, His enemies could do their worst; He would not open His mouth. But in His daily life did He keep His mouth shut? Ask those hypocrites, the Pharisees, who winced and cringed under His terrific denunciations as a pack of hounds would shrink from their master's whip.

I thank God that the Master whom I serve was a man; that though He had all the sweetness and tenderness and gentleness of a little child, yet He was a man—a man with iron in His blood; the kind of a man to whom a woman instinctively looks for protection, and in whose arms little children rest as they who dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Thank God for a Saviour who never ceased to be a God, and who never failed to be a man!

A man—the most courageous, the most fearless, the most heroic man this world has ever known; the one man who could always be depended upon to do the thing that needed to be done, to speak the word that ought to be spoken, to overcome the thing that ought to be overcome, to endure the thing that ought to be endured.

But did not Jesus tell us to turn the other cheek? No. Did He ever turn the other cheek? Did He not tell us that we should not resist evil? No. He was the greatest resister of evil the world ever saw. Did He not use those very words? Yes; but if a man should tell you of a very ugly thing a friend of yours said about you, what would you say? If you were a true friend you would say: "That doesn't sound like him. He may have used those very words, but I want to know what he was talking about." And you would demand to know what he was talking about.

Suppose we should play the part of true friends

to Jesus and ask what He was talking about. What would we learn? If you will turn to the words in the Sermon on the Mount and read the context, you will find that Jesus was talking about the horrible habit of retaliation—striking back in revenge, demanding an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—a habit which was eating the very soul out of the Jewish people. What Jesus was saying was that it was better to endure anything rather than strike back in revenge. If a man wrongs you, it is better to let him wrong you again than strike back in revenge. If he strikes you on one cheek, better let him smite you on the other than strike back in revenge. It would be better never to resist evil at all, than yield to the horrible spirit of revenge.

When we turn aside from these misinterpretations and read the Gospels solely to get at the mind and spirit of Jesus, almost everywhere we come upon Him we see Him in the attitude of a hero. He has the heroic attitude toward life. Human as He is, He is utterly unmoved by the worldly considerations which warp the thinking and dwarf and distort the moral natures of men. He is as indifferent as Almighty God (I say it reverently) to money, to position, to the appeal to "safety first," to considerations of personal comfort. It is utterly impossible for us to conceive of Him as standing on deck and shouting to other people to rescue the man who has fallen overboard. He came to the whole race and it was

nothing to Him to take his place down among the lowly where the great masses of the race were to be found. We can hardly conceive of Him as choosing to live on any other level. If He should come in the flesh to New York to-day, we do not know where He would stop; but no man would dare offer Him a suite at a Fifth Avenue hotel. Nor would any man dare offer Him a luxurious motor car. Everywhere He stands upon a plane that is utterly beyond the reach of the things that appeal to human weakness. Everywhere He is a hero.

He begins His career with an act of heroism that is of such an exalted character that it almost staggers our imagination. We come upon Him sitting upon a rock in a desolate place, almost starved to death. When a man is at that point He is at his weakest point in life, not only physically but morally. He is at the point where most men are no longer governed by any sense of responsibility or obligation to God or man. At that point a man will kill his fellow-man and eat him. And this lone Man in the wilderness has reached His weakest point. It is easy to imagine that as the forces of evil steal upon Him they are smiling at the thought that they will find Him easy prey. They have brought with them all the allurements of the world that could appeal to a good man, and if He does not yield to one He will to another. But the Man gazes upon them all as they pass in a panorama before His mental vision, without so

much as batting an eye; and when it is all over He calmly rises to His feet and takes the steep, rugged path that leads to the Cross the Father has pointed out to Him.

From this point there is heroism all the way to the end. And at the end—

A big, brawny-armed brute of a Roman soldier drops upon his knees beside the prostrate form, picks up his hammer and with a fiendish laugh sends the nails smashing, crashing through the quivering flesh.

And with every muscle and every nerve quivering so that he can hardly form the words upon his lips, the Man groans:

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

VI

I have pointed out only those traits in the character of Jesus which I have found peculiarly winsome, but I need not go further. Let me add a word in regard to His character as a whole.

One of the wonderful things in Jesus which are often overlooked is the power of His character to make us see ourselves. Take your Bible to a quiet place and sit down and be still. Then open it at one of the Gospels and turn the leaves very slowly, and when you come upon a story which brings out a trait of His character very clearly, pause and brood over it. In a few moments you will feel as if you were sitting before a mirror

looking at your own soul in the midst of a flood of light from above. For example, you are brooding over a story, and presently you catch a glimpse of His wonderful love. Instantly you become conscious of little traces of hate or bitterness or narrowness in your own soul, which you never dreamed were there.

Many good people often wonder what use they can make of Jesus in their everyday life. Here is one: we can use His character to keep tab on our inner selves—our souls—just as we use a mirror to keep tab on our outer selves—our bodies. Imagine that you have followed my suggestion; that you have just caught a glimpse of His love that has revealed little traces of hate or bitterness or narrowness in your own soul, just as a careful look at your face in your mirror would reveal a trace of soot on your cheek that you did not dream was there.

Now go on turning the leaves slowly. Here is a story that gives you a glimpse of His purity—His perfect snow-whiteness of soul. Pause over it and in a moment you discover little traces of impurity in your heart which you could never have believed were there. Go on. Here is a story that brings out in a startling way His perfect sincerity. Yesterday, if any man had questioned your sincerity you would have felt like slapping him in the face. You may have questioned your love or the purity of your heart, but you have never doubted that you were sincere. But now as you

look upon the perfect sincerity of Jesus a sense of shame steals over you: you have just caught a glimpse of little traces of insincerity in your heart, your speech, your gestures which you never saw before.

How these quiet-hour glimpses of Jesus stir up my soul even while they fill me with shame! Here I am, a living monument of selfishness. There He goes, spending Himself unto death for others. Here I am, tempted to curse the man who curses me. I turn the leaves of this Book and presently, I see those eyes gazing calmly into mine and I hear Him saying, "Bless them that curse you." Here I am, itching to strike the man who despitefully uses me. Without turning a leaf I look again at His words and again I see those eyes calmly fixed upon me, and I hear Him saying, "Pray for them that despitefully use you." Here I am in an ugly mood, saying to myself: "I like to do kind things for grateful people, people who appreciate my kindness," and I take another look at the same page, and again I meet that calm gaze of his and I hear Him telling me that I should be like my Father, who is kind to the unthankful and evil.

The character of Jesus acts both as a flawless mirror and a perfect light to make us see our hearts just as they are, and thus enables us to keep tab on our inner selves.

A generation ago, when the old custom of frequent self-examination was still in vogue, some

people indulged in self-introspection so much that it made them morbid. Since then, we have been so busy trying to get other people to look into their mirrors that we have fallen out of the habit of looking into our own. And now we are comforting ourselves with the thought that we are at any rate avoiding the danger of becoming morbid. To a beautiful girl who recently wrote me of her perplexity on this point, I replied: "My dear, you are a beautiful thing, but I should hate for you to stop using your mirror. Just as it is necessary to go to a glass mirror often enough to keep tab on the condition of your face, so it is necessary to use the character of Jesus as a mirror often enough to keep tab on the condition of your soul."

A man neglects his mirror and the little specks of dirt accumulate until his face is dirty and he doesn't know it. We call him a hobo. Many modern Christians have neglected to use the character of Jesus as a mirror, and the little specks of sin have accumulated until their souls are dirty. And they don't know it.

A hobo Christian is not a pleasant sight.

VII

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF UNDER- STANDING HIS TEACHINGS

I

WHEN I have succeeded in getting a distinct impression of the character of Jesus by the method which I have suggested and which I have been trying to use in these pages—that is, when I have not been satisfied to stop with analysing the story, but have gone on and tried to grasp it as a whole with my intellectual vision, and then have brooded over it until I have got a view of His character as a whole with my spiritual vision, I have found that I have another reason for believing in Jesus. I believe in Him because of what I have learned of His character, a character which though human, so far transcends the human that it is utterly impossible to account for it on human or natural grounds.

Drop for a moment the kind of thinking you do when you want to get at material facts, and rid your mind as far as possible of all material interests and considerations, and open your heart as well as your mind towards Him in an effort to grasp His character, and you will get an impression that will never allow you to be satisfied with

the theory that the character of Jesus was a purely human character developed to an unusual degree. You have a moral conviction that you are in the presence, not merely of a highly developed man, but of one who is different from all other men.

When I have gone over the words of Jesus by the same method, I find that I have still another reason for believing in Him. Rather I should have said, when I go over His words to-day. While the teachings of Jesus have always seemed to me to be unusual, I did not see in them anything that impressed me as being very far beyond the teachings of other great religious leaders until I had passed through the tragical experience to which I have referred—the experience which led me to a place in life where I could see life from His own point of view, and where I got rid of some other obstacles which all through my early life had effectually shut out the meaning of many of His teachings. This suggests that before taking up the words of Jesus it would be well to think a little while of some of the serious obstacles which we have to contend with to-day in our efforts to understand Him.

Why is it that the simplest of all the great teachers who have come to the human race, is still, after nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching, the most widely misunderstood teacher the world has ever known?

II

Some of the obstacles in the way of understanding Jesus are intellectual; others are spiritual. Perhaps the commonest of the intellectual obstacles are those which through all the ages have made the sexes almost a hopeless mystery to each other. From the beginning of time, men have insisted upon either taking a woman literally or interpreting her from their own point of view. And if I could bring myself to indulge in so reckless a venture, I would say that the same is true of women. Men have always said that you cannot take a woman literally, and yet they have always insisted upon taking her literally. Of course you cannot take a woman literally. Nor can you take a man literally. You cannot take anybody literally except a mathematician who is talking in terms of mathematics, and even then, you must watch him closely lest his figures should drop into figures of speech. And yet we insist upon taking the words of Jesus literally. Do I mean that we must take them figuratively? No; I only mean that we must not take them *l-i-t-e-r-a-l-l-y*—letter for letter, word for word, just as they appear on the surface without regard to what He is talking about. A man treats the words of an enemy that way; a lawyer treats the words of his opponent that way; a husband treats the words of his wife that way; but I know of no friend whose words we treat that way unless we are out of

humour with him, except Jesus. We insist upon taking the words of Jesus literally, whether we are out of humour with Him or not.

We have quite as much difficulty in understanding the words of Jesus when we insist upon interpreting them from our own point of view—just as if the words were spoken by a Westerner to a modern Western audience instead of by an Oriental to an ancient Oriental audience. But this opens up an endless field, and we shall have to pass it by.

Then there is the intellectual difficulty which is common in academic circles; the illusion that to get at the truth about anything in any sphere we must use the scientific method (in spite of the fact that this method was designed only to get at material facts), and must approach it in the scientific attitude of doubt or questioning, which likewise was designed only to get at material facts. I have already referred to the confusion which has resulted from the impossible experiment of trying to get at the truths of the spirit by this method; as for the scientific attitude, well—

Here is John just home from college. John is complaining that we Christians are so unscientific. We just assume that religion is true, when the only way to get at the truth, as everybody knows, is to approach it in an attitude of doubt. I say to him:

“Son, that is true when we are trying to get at a fact about matter. In every material investiga-

tion you must approach a thing in an attitude of questioning or you will never get anywhere. But to say that we must approach religion, which is a thing of the spirit, in the same way, why, that is another matter. Suppose you should wish to get at the truth about your mother's hair. That is a material thing, and you must approach it in an attitude of questioning or doubt. If you should say, 'Oh, Mother is all right, and I know her hair is all right,' you would never get at the truth about it, unless one morning Mother should be in a hurry and leave the truth on the dresser. But suppose you wanted to get at the truth about your mother's love for you. Would you approach the matter in that way? Try it, young man. Go to your mother to-night, before you go to bed and lay your hands upon her shoulders and say: 'Mother, I have been thinking about whether you really love me or not, and I doubt it; and I want to settle it right now.' Do you think you would get anywhere?"

Love shrinks from doubt and shuts itself up like an oyster in its shell.

And so I say to John: "If you want to get at the facts about any material thing that is associated with our religion—such as the materials of which the Bible is composed—approach it in an attitude of doubt if you will; but you will never get at the truth about religion itself that way any more than you will get at the truth about your mother's love that way. You have got to open

your heart to your mother's love and bask in the warm sunshine of it to get at the truth about it, and you have got to open your heart to the life of love we call religion, and bask in the warm sunshine of it to get at the truth about that."

III

Some of our intellectual difficulties grow out of spiritual difficulties. There are evil desires in the heart which unconsciously lead us to a purely materialistic point of view—a point of view from which it is utterly impossible to grasp any spiritual truth which Jesus has taught. And there is our selfish nature which, the moment it begins to master us, leads us to the selfish point of view, where we might as well shut our eyes, for we shall see nothing that is worth while.

The average man is in the world for what he can get out of it. Jesus came for what He could put into it. It is not strange that so many people do not understand Him. A selfish man simply cannot get the point of view of the man who looks out for the other fellow. Doing things for people without pay excites his suspicion; he is sure there is a selfish motive behind it. He looks out for "number one," himself, and he expects other men to do the same; and if he finds a man looking out for "number two" he is tempted to believe that it is only a blind. So when a man undertakes to

help his fellow-men he has a good deal of hard work to do to convince them that he is in earnest.

Jesus had to spend a good deal of time in convincing people that He had no interest of His own to serve, and that His sole desire was to supply their deepest needs. He did not spend a moment looking out for Himself. He did not stand up for the rights which the world is supposed to give to every man who comes into it. He did not even insist upon His right to a place to lay His head. He did not claim that the world owed Him a living. He did not grasp at anything as His own. And whenever He did anything for men it was done so freely that no man ever thought of offering to pay Him for His services. The nobleman of Capernaum would not have dared send Him the camel-load of precious things that surely would have gone to any other man that had healed his son. And He was always doing things for men. He did a great many things for them not so much to help them, as to make them feel that He was ready to help them and that He would supply their deepest needs. This it seems to me is the meaning of such miracles as the feeding of the five thousand. Those people were not starving. They could have gone home for their supper, or they could have gone supperless to bed without serious harm. But He provided the supper with the hope that some of them might be led to look to Him for the things they needed

most. I do not mean that He had no desire to provide a supper for the supperless, but that was not the main thing; the main thing was to lead the people to feel that while He could satisfy all the hungry multitudes going supperless to bed, He was ready to satisfy a deeper hunger—the hunger of their souls.

It was the one consuming desire of Jesus. The people were in great need. Never were people in greater need, and He had come richly supplied with everything they needed. If they could only be made to realise that He could really satisfy their needs! And so He went about among them holding out His hands filled with good things, inviting them to come, trying to entice them by giving them glimpses of the good things He had brought, and oftentimes scattering handfuls of blessings among them. How strange it seems to us that though they accepted the good things which He scattered among them—the healing of their sick, the cleansing of their lepers, the giving sight to their blind—how strange it seems to us that they should still stand aloof, shy, mistrusting, wondering whether they should have anything to do with Him! How strange it must have seemed to Him; how heartbreaking! “Can you not understand”—you can almost hear Him say, as He divides the loaves and the fishes—“Can you not understand, that I have come to satisfy all your needs, to fill the hungry soul with goodness?”

IV

Another obstacle in the way of understanding His teaching is our modern exaggerated idea of the value of physical comfort. There are earnest, hardworking men and women to whom the words of Jesus about taking no anxious thought for to-morrow sound like the visionary vapourings of a holy tramp. Here, indeed, is an intellectual as well as a spiritual obstacle. They have never learned, that while a few of the sayings of Jesus are like gems, which shine whether you leave them in their setting or take them out, most of them are like eyes: the moment you pull them out of their sockets the light is gone. I should not like to judge a man by his eyes if I had never seen them until a surgeon had cut them out and brought them to me; but that is the way these good people have judged the Master. That is the way most of us have judged Him at one time or another.

If we would understand what Jesus meant when He urged His followers not to be anxious about to-morrow's needs we must look at His words as we would look at a man's eyes. That is, we must look at them in their sockets or connection. And this means something more than examining them in connection with the context. I cannot intelligently pass upon what I see in a man's eyes by simply looking at them in connection with their immediate surroundings. The time of day might

have something to do with the light that was in them. And the man himself would have more. To understand a man's words I must take them in connection with the time in which they were spoken, and I must take them in connection with the man himself. And in the case of a man who spoke a language other than my own I must go further; I must not only take his sayings in connection with the time in which they were spoken, but I must take the translated words in connection with the time in which they were translated.

V

There are other obstacles in the way of understanding the words of Jesus, but I shall mention but one more. I have said that in my schooldays I learned two things which I would not part with for the world. I did not get them out of a book; they were simply two bits of advice. One of them came from "Old Mang," the boys' friend. This I have already given. The other came from a professor of mathematics, affectionately known to the boys as "Old Fatty."

One day, after giving the usual instructions about an examination we were about to enter, "Old Fatty" said:

"Now, young gentlemen, let me give you a bit of advice. Here are ten problems. First, work those you can." And with a twinkle in his eyes he added: "And then work those you can't."

We boys smiled and then in our superior sophomoric wisdom proceeded to follow our own counsel, which was to work the hardest problems first, while our minds were fresh. This seemed reasonable enough, but soon after I began I became confused, and in a little while I was in such a fever that I could make no headway. Then I tried another hard problem and another, with the same result. By and by I gave up the hard ones in despair and turned to the easy ones which I knew I could work. But the time was out.

A few bitter experiences of this sort in the course of the next year or two persuaded me to try "Old Fatty's" plan, and the results so impressed me with his wisdom that years afterwards when I was in trouble over my Bible, I began to apply his advice to my Bible study. I had had the same trouble with the hard problems in my Bible. I had a habit of putting the hard problems foremost and they were always in my way. My brain would get into such a fever in my efforts to crack the hard nuts that I would give up and lay the book aside before I had cracked the easy ones. And I was getting nowhere. When I followed "Old Fatty's" advice in my examinations I found that while I was working the easy problems my mind was opening up to my work, I was getting into the mathematical mood, getting more in harmony with my subject, getting gleams of light here and there which would help me further on; and when I came to the hard problems I was

able to crack some of them. And when I tried the plan in my Bible study I found that it worked the same way. When I laid the hard problems of the story of Jesus aside and went on to master what I could master, I found that my mind was opening up to my work, I was getting more and more in harmony with it, I was getting better acquainted with Jesus, learning His ways of thinking and speaking, getting more and more in harmony with His will, and now and then when I ventured to try one of the hard nuts again I found that it was not as hard as I had thought.

And now see what has happened. When I began to try "Old Fatty's" advice in my Bible study I did not reject those hard nuts; I simply set apart a shelf in my mind for them and put them out of my way so that I could go on with my work. Thirty years ago that shelf was piled to the top with nuts I had found too hard to crack. To-day—well, there are a good many there still; some of them will stay there; but there are not one-fourth as many on that shelf as there were twenty-five years ago.

There is an interesting young "courting couple" on the next block. At the beginning of every week they quarrel, and before the end of the week, they make up. People say they are devoted to each other and wonder why they never understand each other. But those who know them well will tell you that it is merely a romance (a physical attachment), and as there is no real love

(which is an attachment of spirit) they have never come to know each other. If, after they marry, a real love should develop they will know each other better, and John will begin to say, "I understand Mary so much better now." And if he should happen upon something which he cannot understand it will not matter much; he will say: "Well, Mary is a mystery, but she's my Mary."

Don't allow these things you cannot understand about Jesus to keep you from the things you can understand. Go on and get acquainted with Him. Give yourself to Him. Live with Him. Fall in with His will. Make His slightest wish your law. And when you come to know Him better you will find yourself saying: "I understand Him so much better now." And if you should come upon something you cannot understand it will not matter much. You will say:

"Well, it's a mystery, but He's my Master."

VIII

A WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE

I

LET us assume that we have got rid of the intellectual obstacles of which I have spoken, and that we are now in a very serious mood—so serious that we have overcome for the moment the spiritual obstacles which still linger in our hearts. There is no longer anything in the way of either our intellectual or spiritual vision, and we have come into a quiet place where we can brood over the words of Jesus in the way I have suggested. How do his words impress you?

As you close the Book I imagine I can hear you saying: "He doesn't talk from a man's point of view at all. He talks from the point of view of One whose vision sweeps both worlds at once. And that is God's point of view."

That is true; and just here is the fundamental difference between the words of Jesus and the utterances of the highest human wisdom of all the ages. As you listen to Him you get many unusual impressions, but the most amazing of all is the feeling that comes to you that you are listening to One who is just as familiar with the world of spirit as He is with the world of matter. He is so

perfectly at home when He talks about the unseen that you never think of His words as uncanny. His Heavenly Father's house is just as real, just as natural, as His mother's humble home in Nazareth. He speaks of God as a man would speak of his own father whom he had seen at the breakfast-table an hour before.

History contains no record of any other teacher who talked in this way. The wisest men of whom we have record never showed the slightest familiarity with anything beyond the present life. Agnostics have called our attention to the last talk of Socrates and asked if it were not as lofty in every respect as the last talk of Jesus the night before His death. They have placed them side by side and examined them with their intellects alone and they are unable to see any striking difference between them. But there is another test. Read that last talk of Socrates in a quiet place and then read the last talk of Jesus, and then note the impressions which they have made upon you.

Listen to Socrates. He is talking about the world to which he is going. He says that he hopes to be with good men, but hastens to add that of this he is not confident. He does feel quite sure, however, that he will be with gods who are good governors. That is about all. How does he impress you? You say at once that you see no difference between his knowledge of the unseen and that of any other man. He is talking as every other man talks at such a time—before a closed

door which he has never entered. It is perfectly plain that he is not familiar with his subject; he is only guessing.

Now listen to Jesus. Socrates hopes to find good men in the world to which he is going. In other words he does not know *where* he is going. Jesus says He is going back to the place from which He came—going back to the Father who sent Him. He speaks of the Father's house with the familiarity of a son who has lived at home on familiar terms with his father, who has some rights there, and who is going home to get things ready so that his friends may come and be with him. Here is something absolutely unique both in history and literature. No other being ever impressed the world as a man whose vision swept both worlds at once.

I am aware that there are earnest students who will insist that there is no essential difference between the impression made by the words of Jesus and that made by the words of the best of the Hebrew prophets; but my answer to this is the same. One may not see the difference in a purely intellectual study, but one will realise the difference if one will compare them in the way I have suggested. I think if you will make the test you will feel very much as the Galilæans felt when they listened to the words of Jesus and then thought of the teachings of their rabbis. Jesus, they said, spoke as a man who had authority. How different from the scribes, who could only

quote the authority of others! And they might have said practically the same thing of the prophets that they said of the scribes. None of the prophets claimed anything more than to be a mouthpiece of God. They simply passed on to men the utterances of One who was external to and infinitely above themselves. Jesus never regarded Himself as a mouthpiece. He did say that He spoke only what His Father gave Him to speak, but that Father, He was bold to declare, was not external to Himself; in a very real sense He was in the Father and the Father in Him.

II

Just here those of my younger readers who have fallen in with the idea that to be modern in one's thinking, one must be radical, will wish to remind me that I am quoting from the Gospel of John, which I must remember was written too late to be accepted as a reliable record of the words of Jesus, and that if we would get at the facts we must go to the earlier Gospels, preferably to that of Mark, the earliest of all. Let me say a word on this point before I pass on.

The view that we should look to Mark rather than John for the truth about Jesus (which is usually given us with the gentle reminder that Mark, who wrote nearer to the time of Jesus did not regard Jesus as divine at all), gave me no little trouble until one day, while comparing the two

Gospels, I was struck with the remarkable difference between the spiritual vision of their authors. That comparison settled the question. I said to myself: "The man who wrote the Gospel of Mark had an eye for the facts, but the man who wrote the Gospel of John had an eye for the truth. If I wished to get at the material facts about the life of Jesus I might prefer to go to Mark; but if I wished to get at the truth about Jesus Himself,—if I were longing to catch a vision of His mind and spirit—if I wanted to settle the question of divinity in Jesus, I would prefer to go to a book written by a man who, in the course of a long life of the most intimate comradeship with Christ, had developed a spiritual vision which was far beyond that of such men as Mark or Matthew or Luke." When I compare the spiritual vision of John with that of any one of the other evangelists I am glad that John did not write until long after their time.

III

The impression which we get in reading the words of Jesus—the feeling that we are listening to one who though human is above human—is all the stronger when we place His sayings side by side with the best specimens of human wisdom which we possess.

Here, for example, are our popular ideas of life. Place these ideas by the side of the Master's views of life and compare them. I think I can safely

say that if you will make this experiment when you are in a serious mood and in a quiet place you will get an impression that will make you blush for your race. You will say that the ideas of life which we humans have conceived smell of the earth—some of them indeed of the lower animals—while the idea of Jesus make you feel as if you had left the odours of the barnyard to breathe the pure, fragrant air of heaven.

Here is a very modern man—an excessively modern man—who, let us say, has succeeded in shutting out of his mind all the thinking of the world that has been influenced by the teachings of Jesus, and is now doing his own thinking without any aid from without. Let us listen to him as he gives utterance to his profoundest wisdom.

He is talking about liberty. Liberty, he tells us, is the right to do as we please and the only way to get it is to break loose from all restraint. The human race, he is quite sure, will never amount to anything until it rises in its might and destroys all the bonds that men and women have tied about themselves, including parental authority, marriage vows, government, religion, and proceeds to follow its own natural inclinations from the cradle to the grave. Now turn to the teachings of Jesus in which He pictures true freedom, not as the liberty to go in any direction we please, but the liberty to rise toward our high destiny as sons of God. This liberty, He tells us, is something we get, not by cutting loose from all restraint, but by

tying ourselves up to the things that are above us—the things that are high and pure and noble and true—that they may draw us upward and thus break the bonds which are really holding us down. We are slaves to evil; to the false; if we would be free we must tie ourselves up to the good and the true. “I am the truth,” He says. “Tie yourself up to me; follow me; follow me by following my truth; and as you try to follow my truth it will draw you—I will draw you—away from the false to which you are bound, and your bonds will break and thus the truth—thus I who am the truth—will make you free. If the Son of man makes you free you will be free indeed. You will be able to follow me on, up to your divine destiny as a son of God.”

Listen again. This very modern man likes to talk on scientific subjects. He has just said something about the survival of the fittest. “Why not?” he asks. “Why should we not adopt this principle in everything in life? Here we are helping the unfit to survive and cluttering up the world with homes for incurables. How foolish! Why shouldn’t we gently chloroform all the unfits and misfits out of existence and give the world to those who are fit to live in it?” Now compare this specimen of unaided human wisdom with the teachings of Jesus, in whose eyes every human being, whether he has two legs or one, two eyes or none, is still a son of God, brought into existence for an immortal destiny.

Listen again. The modern man is talking about what he calls this superstition about sin. There is no such thing as sin. What we call little Johnny's badness is simply bad tonsils or adenoids, or possibly appendicitis. Bad people don't need a religion, they need a surgeon's knife. Now listen to the one Physician who knows us down to the very bottom of our being. All the evil that afflicts humanity, He tells us, comes from the heart. I have long been impressed with the perfect sanity of Jesus, and I am quite sure that if He were here in the flesh to-day, He would tell us that physical evils often aggravate moral evils, and that if little Johnny shows signs of physical trouble he should be taken to the doctor; but I am equally sure that He would add that the bottom secret of Johnny's badness is not in his nose nor his throat, but in his heart, and that we should also bring little Johnny to Him, who is the only Physician of the hearts of children, little or big.

Turn again and listen to our modern thinker as he discourses upon the wisdom of living a perfectly natural life, which he explains is the life we live when we follow our natural inclinations. He wonders at the folly of men in holding on to such a primitive, outworn superstition as marriage. All prohibitory laws, he informs us, are an outrage upon humanity, and marriage is our most ancient prohibitory law. The only beautiful, safe and really moral life is a perfectly natural life.

The pretty birds have no marriage laws, but change their mates every spring, and they are billing and cooing and pouring out their happiness in song all the day long. Why should we not be natural like the pretty birds?

I have said that some of our ideas have the smell of the lower animals. This is one of them. Compare this idea, which we humans conceived by watching the birds, with the teaching of Jesus as He declares that marriage is a life-time union and that it is of God's own planning. But let us go on.

Again our modern thinker is talking about life. We are in this world for what we can get out of it. It is ours, anyway, and we have a right to all that is in it. After all, a man's life consists in the abundance of things which he possesses. Now turn to the words of Jesus.

Jesus tells us that a man's life does *not* consist in the abundance of things which he possesses. The modern thinker has just said that it does, and I imagine that a good many of us, deep down in our hearts, find ourselves in sympathy with him. At any rate, most humans spend their lives grasping at things and they want an abundance of them. This, the modern thinker tells us, is the secret of happiness. He is not alone. Every generation from the beginning of the race has thought the same thing. Little Johnny, with the long-drawn whine, is confident that all that he needs to make

him happy is a bicycle. He gets his bicycle and he is whining Johnny still. Mary believes that her little heart will be perfectly satisfied if she can only get that new dress with the pretty flower in it. She gets it and straightway begins to assure herself that her happiness depends upon a new hat to match. And Johnny's and Mary's father has been thinking all his life that if a man has money he can have anything, and all the while he has been getting money he has been getting poorer in mind, in heart, in the things which make for righteousness, in the capacity to enjoy life or to get anything out of it except more money.

The world has never been able to point to a man who has been made happy by mere getting. Money-getters have been surfeited, but not satisfied. It has been said that the most miserable women in society are the wives of multi-millionaires who have not saved themselves from *ennui* by becoming absorbed in benevolent or charitable work. They have everything that money can buy and there is nothing to strive for, and they are tired. Not until they lose sight of themselves and their possessions and become absorbed in some effort to help others do they begin to live. Happiness comes from within, not from without—from that which God puts into our hearts and not that which we gather around us. That, at least, is one meaning of the Beatitudes.

Does Jesus teach us that we should be indifferent to the things which make for our daily com-

fort? No; but He would not have us indifferent about the things which make for our eternal comfort. We are not to be careless about our bread-winning, but He would have us remember that life is more than meat. We are not to be improvident as to the present life, but our real, abiding concern should be for life eternal. Yes, money is a good thing in its place, but it does not belong in the first place. It is not worthy of the first place. How can it be worthy of the first place in our hearts when there is so much that is better which we need to win? Life is the great thing. If money does not enrich life why should we place such a high estimate upon it? It should have our thought, but it should not have our anxious concern. There are better things which call for our best thought. It is not what we wish but what we need that counts. We wish to be rich, perhaps; but we need to be rich toward God. We wish a quiet home, but we need a quiet heart. We want to lay up treasures on earth, but we need to lay up treasures in heaven. We want to beautify our home, but we need to adorn our souls. We want more land, more stock, more bonds; but we need more love, more courage, more faith, more power for the job which God has given us to do. Little Mary wants a new dress, but her need is to be clothed with humility. She feels that she must have a new ring or a new pin, but her need is the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

IV

But we are never so deeply impressed with the wisdom of Jesus in His teachings about this life as we are when we compare our thinking about the problems of life with His. Let us, for example, take two of the most serious problems the world is thinking about to-day.

Here is the problem of war. Look back into the past and see what the best worldly wisdom has had to suggest about it. Here is a great quarrel dividing a nation—a quarrel about slavery, or State rights, or both. People have lost sight of Jesus as the light of men, and they have been seeking light from their leaders. And what are these leaders saying? They are saying that this thing has gone so far that it requires desperate measures. The people are sick and they have too much blood and there is nothing like the old-fashioned remedy: the patients must be bled. And the best way to do it is to take them out into a field and divide them into two opposing groups and put guns into their hands and let them bleed one another. Then when they have finished their work we can take everybody who is bleeding to the hospital and heal those who are not too far gone, and give them crutches and send them home. And when we have repeated the process enough to reduce the blood on both sides to a safe point, and the people are pretty well cooled off, our leaders will put on their best clothes and their best swords

and their best manners, and meet and bow to each other and shake hands. And then the band will play "The Star-Spangled Banner."

That seems to be about the highest point that human wisdom without aid from above has ever reached on the subject of war. Now what does Jesus say about it? If our honest but fevered fathers had asked that question and waited for an answer they would have heard Him saying in their hearts: "Sit down in this cool place and let us keep quiet awhile."

And they would have sat down and taken off their hats and cooled their fevered brows. And when their hearts had grown calm they would have heard Him say:

"You don't know what spirit you are of. You don't know who you are. You are not animals, you are spirits—sons of God with an immortal destiny, made to live for ever with God as your Father and with your fellow-men as your brothers. This is a family affair. Here you are, brothers, debasing yourselves in an unseemly quarrel right before your Father. There is but one thing that will hold a family together and that is sacrificial love—a love that puts the other first. A new commandment I give unto you, not that you love one another, but that you love one another as I have loved you—with a love that goes to the limit of sacrifice; a love unto death."

And then He would have left them to think it over. And very likely somebody would have said:

“He is right: let us follow Him. We are brothers and we must live together, and we cannot seal a union with the blood we draw from each other’s veins. We can seal it only with the blood we draw from our own veins; we must sacrifice—each for the other.”

And they would have stepped up from the low, animal plane of selfishness to the high, spiritual plane of sacrificial love, where they would have found themselves in the presence of God; and in the light of His presence and with a sacrificial love warming their hearts they would have found the path to peace.

v

Here is our marriage problem. For twenty years or more, able experts, representing the highest human wisdom, have been studying statistics and racking their brains for a divorce law or a programme of education that will save marriage and the home to the American people. In all this period our representatives of mere human wisdom have not been able to suggest anything beyond reforms in divorce laws, living conditions, and educational programmes. And every day the problem has been growing worse. Now compare these two suggestions for the preservation of marriage and home with the teachings of Jesus. Listen to Him. We have been trying marriage as a contract. That places it on the level of selfish-

ness. Jesus asks us to accept marriage as a lifetime union. That places it on the unselfish level of sacrificial love. Sacrificial love is the only thing that has ever been found that makes a real union possible. It is the only thing that can stand the wear and tear and strain of family life. Sometimes indeed we experiment with marriage as a union, but often in such cases we start on a basis of romance alone, mistaking it for love, and so fail to reach the high level of sacrificial love, just as we do when we try marriage as a contract. For romance is not love; it is an attachment of the flesh, and love is an attachment of spirit. And romance is one of the most selfish things in the world.

Stand in the light of these facts and listen to Jesus. Human wisdom has no suggestion to offer for the preservation of marriage as a union; it only suggests certain things that will in some measure relieve the evils which result from trying to live together in marriage as a contract. Jesus asks us to bring our lives in marriage as in everything else under the rule of sacrificial love—the kind of love that He has for us. “A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

To realise just what this means one only needs to look at the solution offered by human wisdom and the solution offered by Jesus in the light of experience. Here is a young couple just starting

in marriage on the basis which Jesus offers. There is, of course, a romantic attachment, but there is also a spiritual attachment. They have a spiritual love, which is always unselfish, always putting the other first, always seeking opportunities to express itself in sacrifice. Now what happens? Every morning as John goes downtown he is asking himself, "What can I do for Mary?" Twenty times a day he asks, "What can I do for Mary?" And Mary goes about her work around the house asking herself, "What can I do for John?" Twenty times a day she asks, "What can I do for John?" And just so long as they keep their wedded life on that basis, their home is a little heaven, no matter whether the dresser in Mary's room is a five-hundred-dollar antique or a flour barrel covered with cretonne.

But one dark, drizzly morning, John gets up wrong side foremost. And when a man gets up wrong side foremost he begins to think backwards. And on his way downtown John begins to ask, not "What can I do for Mary?" but "What is Mary doing for me?" And the thing grows and grows, and being contagious, sooner or later Mary catches it; and one morning she starts about her work around the house muttering, "What is John doing for me?"

And the little heaven becomes a hell.

There is but one step from heaven to hell in a home. All you have to do is to step down from the level of the sacrificial love of Jesus, where we

ask, "What can I do for Mary?" to the level of selfishness, where we ask, "What is Mary doing for me?"

When I compare the best that human wisdom offers for this problem with the teachings of Jesus, I feel as if I were comparing earth with heaven. Jesus is the one Teacher who has the advantage of the light of heaven as well as the light of earth all along the way. He knows all that we know about ourselves, and if we will brood over his words in a quiet place we may come to the conclusion that He also knows all that our Maker knows about us.

IX

HIS SUPERHUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NEEDS

I

WHEN I compare the teachings of Jesus about man and his life in this world with the highest human wisdom, I think I know how Paul felt when he declared with an emphasis which seems almost like a gesture of contempt, that the wisdom of men was foolishness with God. That is the way it impresses me; even in matters relating to this earthly life the highest human wisdom is foolishness with the God we see in the face of Jesus Christ. But this impression, profound as it is, is as nothing compared to the impression I get of His knowledge and wisdom as I listen to His words about the things of the spirit. Here, also, the impression is deepest when I compare His ideas with the wisest reflections that have come to us from purely human sources.

Take, for example, His ideas about what we call religion—something, by the way, which He never calls by that name. We do not need to recall the crude religions of the ancients to realise the difference. It becomes plain enough when we compare His religion as it is unfolded in the Gospels

with any of the various and sundry revisions of Christianity which are being offered to us by leading intellectuals of our day.

Here are six distinguished scholars, all of them good men, most of them Christians, in one sense or another. Each of them is the champion of a religion which he calls the religion needed for the times. One of them tells us that what Jesus really came for was to make the world safe for democracy, and that Christianity is simply a plan to make the world safe for democracy. Another is quite as sure that Jesus had a simpler mission than that—that He came simply to make us happier by making us kinder, and that His religion is only a matter of going out and giving your fellow-man a lift. Still another—a tremendously earnest man—wishes that people could be made to understand that Jesus never had the slightest idea of making people pious; that what He wanted men to do was to stop their pious talk about clean hearts and get out into the world and work for clean streets, clean milk for babies, and clean city politics. The fourth man, who once donned overalls and studied industrial problems at first hand until his heart was almost broken over what he saw, solemnly assures us that what Jesus came for was to rescue the oppressed from the oppressor, and that the great mission of Christians is to deliver the enslaved workingmen of the world from the tyranny of a capitalistic society. The fifth tells us that the mission of Jesus was to make

the world fit to live in; while the sixth, more specific, insists that the idea of Jesus was to make the world fit to live in by providing for the material needs and comfort of the race.

Now let us turn from these teachers and listen to Jesus as He reveals His knowledge of human needs, and of how these needs can be met. What do you think of His knowledge and wisdom compared to the knowledge and wisdom of these six teachers? Perhaps you will say that the ideas of the six men are good enough as far as they go; and that is true. Also you may say that all of them put together do not cover the needs of men which are covered by the religion of Jesus; and that, too, is true. The religion of Jesus covers all that these religions offer, but it goes further and provides for the deepest needs of men, needs which the religions these men are offering us do not even recognise. That is the trouble with most of our modern revisions of Christianity; like the ancient pagan religions, they seek to provide for transient wants rather than for fundamental and eternal needs.

As a matter of fact, they do not attempt to provide for a single really deep need of our nature. We want to make the world safe for democracy, but we need to make our homes safe for love. We want clean streets, but we need—we are bound to have—clean hearts. We want honesty in city government, but what we need—what we are bound to have—is honesty in the depths of our souls. We

want to give our business neighbour a lift, but just now there is a loved one at home whose back is almost broken under the burdens of life, and we are needing a religion that will help us to be as considerate of our loved ones at home as we are of our business friends downtown. We want to make the world fit to live in, but what we need is to be made fit to live in it. And, of course, we ought to provide for the material needs of our fellow-men and do everything we can to smooth their path for them; but just now some of us are desperately in need of a religion that will help us to provide for the needs of the family next door that has no material needs at all but is about the neediest family we know.

Those people next door have been healthy and prosperous all their lives, and they do not know what it is to have a material need. Yet the father of the family is a scoundrel, the mother is a painted butterfly, the daughter threatens to bring the family into disgrace, and the son—if I may use an unfragrant phrase of the street—is simply rotten. What has a religion that was designed for the material comfort of men to offer that family? What has it to offer the millions of Americans who to-day are making a good living but who don't know how to live?

And there are others. Yonder goes an endless procession of men whose backs and hearts are almost broken under the burdens of life; not material burdens, but moral and spiritual burdens:

skeletons in the family closet; wrecked homes; burdens that drive men to consider whether it would not be just as well to get a gun and end it all. What has your religion of material comfort to offer these men? There goes another procession—literally millions of women who started in life happy-hearted girls, every one of them, but who blundered, perhaps in marriage, and since that day life has been an endless chain of thwarted hopes and consuming griefs, and not one rose has bloomed along their desert road. What has your religion of material comfort to offer them? This very moment a hundred thousand gaunt and ghastly faces are pressed against the cold window pane of death, peering out into the darkness, trying to see what is beyond. What has your religion of material comfort to offer them?

One might as well be frank. The ideas of religion which are being taught to-day by men who have chosen the line of least resistance and revised Christianity to make it conform to the times, instead of helping the times to conform to Christianity, do not impress us as examples either of knowledge or of wisdom. These men are making the very same blunders that were made by the pagan leaders of old. They offer us a religion that is only a job. They say, "Here's your duty; go and do it." They assume that men want to do their job and that they have the passion and power to do it, and then content themselves with

pointing men to their job. "Humanity is in need; go and pour out your life in a stream of service for humanity." Jesus, who knows us better than we know ourselves, makes no such mistake. He nowhere offers us a religion that is merely a job; He offers us something that gives us strength for our job. He does not tell us to go out and pour out our lives in a stream of service for humanity. He knows that we have no spring from which a stream of service can flow, and He bids us first come to Him and let Him give us a spring—"a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

II

But this is not all. The highest worldly wisdom has never gone beyond the idea of saving men by attaching them to a thing. All the religions that we read about outside of the Bible are attempts to save or help men by attaching them to a thing—a form of worship, a system of belief, a philosophy, a mode of conduct, a programme of service. Even Christian leaders, when they lose their vision of Christ, seek to save men by attaching them to a thing. To Jesus, who saw that what men needed was life, this idea must have seemed utterly puerile. If men needed life it was foolish to try to save them by attracting them to a lifeless thing. They needed to be attached to something that had life. And so He came to do what no one else had ever attempted

to do or thought of doing: He came to give men life by attaching them to a living Person—a Person who would not only be to them all that a perfect example could be—an inspiration as well as a pattern to go by—but who would share with them all the way, His life—life for their spirits, His vital force, His love, His faith, His courage,—all that they would need for the job God had given them for this world and for whatever might await them in the world to come.

In another chapter I shall try to present the religion of Jesus in a picture that will be so plain that a child can understand it; but the little glimpse I have just given is sufficient for our present purpose. Place the modern thinker's idea of religion by the side of the general idea of Jesus and compare them. What do you see? I think you will notice at once, if you have never noticed it before, that the modern thinker, in suggesting the kind of religion we need, is not thinking of the needs of human beings at all; he is thinking of what he conceives to be the needs of our times, our civilisation, our society. On the other hand, Jesus is not looking at our times or our civilisation or our society. He is interested in bringing human beings into the Kingdom of God—bringing them under the rule of God, bringing them into the family of God where they belong. Men are in a bad way. They are the Father's children, but they don't know it, and when the Father speaks to them they don't recognise His voice. They be-

long in the Father's kingdom—the Father's family,—but they don't know it, and they don't have anything to do with the family. They are like that unnatural son Tom, who seems to have been born without any natural affection; who has no use for his father, who has never realised that he is his father, but thinks of him as “the old man,” “the governor,” “the family purse,” and who, because he does not know the head of the family as his father, does not love the children of the family as his brothers or sisters. He comes and goes, but not as a member of the family. He recognises no obligations to the family. The family is not his family. The home is not his home. He comes to it only to eat and sleep. It's the “old man's” boardinghouse and he is beating the “old man” out of his board.

What hope is there for that boy? What does he need? What must happen to him—what must be done for him to bring him to his place in the family, that he may fall in with his father and brothers and sisters and begin to amount to something?

If you will listen closely to Jesus as He talks with men about the Father, you will find that He is thinking of them just as we would think about that unnatural boy Tom. And when you look at what we call His plan of salvation you will see that it is His answer to the question we ask about Tom. He has looked beneath our times, our civilisation, our society to the depths of our souls, and

He has found just wherein we are lacking, and has come with a plan to bring us—unnatural children—to our senses, to make us over, to lead us to our place in the Father's family that we may have a chance to amount to something, to achieve our divine destiny as real sons in the Father's family.

When I go over the whole plan of Jesus and brood over it until it looms up clearly before me like a picture, I feel that I am gazing upon a wisdom compared with which the highest earthly wisdom is foolishness. The wisdom of the world is not only foolishness with God; it is foolishness with us when we look upon the wisdom of God, as we see it in the teachings of His Son.

III

HIS INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

I

WE get another impression of the divine in the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus when we read—rather, when we brood over—His sayings about God. I do not think that anyone who has tested this will question it. At such moments the divine wisdom in the Master's words becomes as apparent as the human foolishness which we come upon in the words of worldly men about God.

Listen for a moment to the highest human wisdom on the subject of the providence of God. To the worldly wiseman of to-day the idea that God really cares is simply an ancient superstition. To the highest wisdom among the ancient heathen it was a wish or hope rather than a fixed belief. Sometimes a wise heathen would try to assure men that God cared for them because he was their creator, but it seldom worked. The ancient Hebrew teachers assured their people that God cared for them because they were His peculiar people, and that would work—until there was a succession of crop failures, and then the people would turn their backs upon Jehovah and seek

help from one of the heathen Baals—the Baal who was supposed to have charge of the harvest.

Now listen to Jesus. Here is a word that is so simple that the modern man can hardly refrain from smiling at it, but when we brood over it we come to the conclusion that it is the only worthwhile word that has ever been spoken on the subject. It may not appeal to our minds while we keep our hearts closed, but when our hearts as well as our minds are open, we find that it appeals to both.

Let us try to put ourselves in the place of those simple, anxious Galilæan hearers, to whom God was little more than an absentee ruler. Jesus would awaken a new hope in their hearts. “Why, of course, God cares for you,” He says to them. “God is your Father.”

It is impossible to miss His meaning. Caring is a parent’s business. That’s what parents are for. They put their children first. If a famine should come to this land and you had but a single dry crust left in your house, would you not press that dry crust into the hand of your little child and stand before him and smile upon him as he ate it every bit? And think you that you are a better father than your Father in heaven?

Notice how this simple word of faith impresses you. If a friend should introduce me to an audience as a man who cares for his own, I should not feel that he had paid me a very high compliment. Such praise might satisfy a youngster, but I am

a father, and no father would like to hear people say that he cares for his own children. It is too much like saying that he is not a thief or a loafer. For there is not a true father in all the world who does not agree with Paul that he who provides not for his own is a terribly bad man.

Here is the key to this whole problem of providence. So long as we think of God merely as God, we have a hard time trying to assure ourselves of His loving care; but if we would think of Him as Jesus asks us to think of Him, the question would be settled forever. We never find it necessary to assure ourselves that our Heavenly Father cares for His own; we only find it necessary to assure ourselves that a God whom we do not think of as a father, cares for His own.

When Jesus came He found the world full of people who were thinking of God as unnatural children think of their father. An unnatural child never thinks of his father as his father. To his mind a father is simply the family moneybag, or the man who will be "awfully mad" when he comes home and finds that he has been bad. And so he is never quite sure about him. Sometimes he feels sure about himself and at such times he drives away anxiety by assuring himself that he can "work the old man" for what he wants; but he is never sure of him. Who can be sure of a man who is nothing but a moneybag with a gift for getting mad when a boy is bad?

Jesus saw people going to God just as an un-

natural child goes to the father whom he never thinks of as his father. It horrified Him. How strange that men should go to His Father with anxiety written all over their faces! How strange that they should think of His Father as a rich stranger whom they might possibly "work" for what they needed if they could only manage to get into His good graces! "Why," I can hear Him saying, "what does this mean? Why do you treat my Father as if He could not be trusted? He is not a rich stranger; He is my Father, and He is your Father. Can't you trust your Heavenly Father? When you were dependent upon your earthly father for your daily food, did you consume your soul with anxiety over your bread problem? And you who are fathers—don't you trust yourselves to do your best for your children? If you—imperfect as you are—know what is best for your children and can trust yourselves to do your best for them, can you not trust your Heavenly Father, who has the power to do all that His infinite love and wisdom may prompt Him to do?"

The fact is that God is our Father, and that fact alone settles the question of God's care for His own. If I don't know God as my Father nothing could make me sure of His care; if I know Him as my Father I shall have no doubt of His care. For, caring for one's own is not only a father's business, but as Jesus teaches, a father's very nature.

II

Again, compare the ideas which we have conceived about the way to find God with the ideas of Jesus. The modern thinker who is seeking God, is having a hard time. He has been trying to reason out God, trying to find something in philosophy that will suggest a path to God, trying to track God through nature, as a man would track an animal through a forest; and if you ask him what he has found he will shake his head wearily and change the subject. It is an old story and as pitiful as it is old. Wise men of the world have always tried to find God by searching for Him with their physical and intellectual eyes alone. And, usually, they have found nothing but trouble for their pains. Even we modern Christians find nothing but trouble when we try to settle our questions about God according to our own wisdom. Jesus comes to us with a plan the world never dreamed of. He says to us in effect: "You can't find God that way. You would not recognise His footprints if you saw them. And if you came to Him you could not see Him. I have come to offer you a better way. Instead of going over the world to find God, come to me. Fall in with me. Live with me. Make my will your will. Do as you see me do. Make me your comrade, your guide, your inspiration, your source of supply. Open your hearts to me and listen to my words. And without trying to reason out God at all, you

will come to know Him. For the Father is in me, and when you see my love you see the Father's love; and when you learn my will you learn the Father's will; and when you realise my power you realise the Father's power."

To fully realise the divine wisdom in this plan of Jesus, we only need to think of it in connection with our own mental struggles to arrive at a satisfying view of God. In a wonderfully vivid picture that has just come up to me from the past, whether from my dream life or my real life, I shall not undertake to inquire—I can see myself lying upon my bed one night in my youth feverishly struggling to account for a strange, distressing feeling, apparently a deep yearning in my heart for something on which my very life seemed to depend. Perhaps it is only the memory of a dream. Let us call it a dream. I remember I grew quiet at last and turned over toward the window and looked out at the stars. And instantly it came again. Something in those stars—

Was it God? Was it true as that preacher had said—that red-headed, blue-eyed preacher who had got so close to me—that there was something in me that was hungry for God? And that sooner or later I would find that it would have to be satisfied?

But I could not convince myself that I was yearning for God. I no longer had that strangely bitter feeling toward Him which I had in my child-

hood, but I could not honestly say that I felt any special interest in Him. My conscience smote me as I thought of it. I knew that I ought to yearn for Him, and as I lay there I tried to warm toward Him. But I found it impossible; when I thought of him apart from my mother he was too cold. At last my thoughts turned toward Jesus and it occurred to me, that while I always lost interest in God the moment I ceased to think of my mother, I never lost interest in Jesus. My heart would warm toward Him whether I was thinking of my mother or not.

My anguish had now passed away and again I lay still looking at the stars. I tried to unravel my confused ideas about God and Jesus. If the two were indeed one why should my heart go out toward one and not toward the other? It seemed to me that my thoughts about God and Jesus were so different from the thoughts of other people. So many people were easily satisfied about God, but not about Jesus, while I was easily satisfied about Jesus but not about God. I knew that I could not think of them as one so long as they appeared so different, but why did they appear so different? For a long time I lay looking at the two pictures, as they existed in my mind, and trying to account for them. It was plain that my mental picture of Jesus was formed first. The first outlines must have been drawn by my mother. But later my father came to her help,

and the Quiet Lady across the street may also have had a hand in it.

It was also plain—and this interested me greatly—that my picture of Jesus had remained practically unchanged down to the present.

But I was not so sure about my picture of God, which, it seemed to me, had been changing all my life. I could not begin to count the changes which God had passed through in my mind. I remember distinctly how He looked the first time I thought I saw Him. I must have been very small. I was out in the backyard one day and I looked up at the sky, and there was a great pile of white clouds, and He was sitting among them—a great, white-haired man with a long, snowy beard. He had a benevolent look and I knew that He must be kind to little boys. A little later God became a king—a great king who sat on a high throne and had a crown on His head. And I no more thought of Him as one who must be kind to little boys. Then, one day the king disappeared, and in His place I saw an Awful Eye. Then He became a king again—the terrible Scare King of my old black mammy's inherited theology. I could see plainly now that it came from my old mammy's theology and not from her heart.

Then God became a policeman, who was always watching to catch bad boys in their meanness. Then He seemed to turn to something like Uncle Richard, the meanest righteous man I ever knew. And so on. I could not clearly make out the

changes after that, but He seemed to become less terrible and I imagine that I could trace a growing air of indifference. But I may have been mistaken, for the pictures were now rapidly becoming more and more blurred. Some of the pictures I was sure were composites which my imagination had constructed out of symbolical pictures which I had happened upon in the old Family Bible, which I thought bore the finger marks of that hard, unforgiving Uncle Richard. Uncle Richard was fond of reading about the God who dwelt among the thick clouds of Sinai, and I always thought he would have been better satisfied if the God of Elijah had been in the mighty wind that rent the mountains and in the fire and in the earthquake, rather than in the still small voice which followed that awful spectacle.

Just then the utter absurdity of it all fell upon me and I laughed bitterly. No wonder I had found it hard to believe in God. Who could believe in a God who was now a benevolent old gentleman, now a king, now an Awful Eye, now a policeman, now an Uncle Richard? I should have been ashamed to let a pagan see what I had been trying to worship. Pagans did believe in something, and here I was trying to worship nothing. Absolutely nothing! How strange that no one had ever told me a better way! How strange that not a single teacher I ever had had told me that the way to find the true God, a God I could feel

like worshipping, was to go to Jesus; that Jesus had come to reveal to us a God we could not only worship but could actually love! For years and years I had been trying to take this queer composite picture for God when I might have taken Jesus. Jesus was the only picture of God I had ever seen that satisfied my inner being—the only picture that I thought looked as God ought to be—what my inmost something told me that God must be. He, and He alone, expressed God to me.

Why should I not accept as God the Spirit I could see in that Man, and who satisfied my intellect as well as my heart, instead of this miserable composite structure which I had made up from here, there and everywhere, and which had never satisfied either? Why should I keep on struggling to get a satisfactory idea of God when I could look into the face of Jesus and see One who answered every detail of my heart's picture of God? "Is it not reasonable," I asked myself, "to suppose that the Man of the Gospels is a more reliable likeness of God than any of these crude pictures which I have made out of little bits of nonsense I have picked up from everywhere? Why, after all, should I not put aside this crude composite in my mind, and look for God in the face of Jesus Christ?"

We never settle our questions about God until we give up trying to find Him by our own methods and fall in with this simple plan of Jesus.

III

We get still another impression of divinity in the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus when we brood over His sayings about Himself. Here we catch a vision of His self-consciousness which is wholly unlike anything that has ever been discovered in any other being. Nowhere do we find the slightest indication of confusion or questioning in the mind of Jesus in regard to Himself. His consciousness of Himself is as clear as a sunbeam. He realises his kinship with us; He is just as conscious of a more intimate kinship with God. There is an almost naïve simplicity in the way He exhibits his consciousness of Himself. You have heard a little child say, with perfect frankness and without the slightest trace of vanity, or pride, or spirit of boastfulness, "I know I'm beautiful." Listen to Jesus and note the childlike frankness and simplicity with which He makes far greater claims. Without the slightest gesture of pretence or of boasting, but in the same spirit in which He told us that He came as a servant—came not to be ministered unto but to minister—He tells us that He is greater than the prophets, that He does His wonders by the power of God (rather "the finger of God"), that He has authority to forgive sin, that He came to redeem us, that He came to give us life—eternal life—that the Father has delivered all things into His hands, that He is Lord of all things, that He has angels at His command,

that He will come to judge the world. He declares before the court in perfect simplicity of spirit that He is the Son of God. He tells us that He is in the Father and the Father in Him, that He that has seen Him has seen the Father. Without the slightest affectation, without playing a part, He declares His pre-existence. Listen! "Before Abraham was I am." Listen! "Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

You say that I am quoting from John and that you are not sure about John. Very well, listen! "Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in his own glory and in the glory of the Father." You say, "That also is from John." No; it sounds like John, but it is in Luke. "No one knoweth who the Son is save the Father and who the Father is save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." That, too, sounds like John, but it is not in John; it is in Luke. "And they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and he shall send forth his angels." That surely is as great a claim as we find in John; but it is not in John; it is in Matthew.

But this is not all. In all ages, the purest and noblest men have had the deepest sense of their own sinfulness. Job, in the presence of his critics, felt that he was a good man, but when God spoke to him, he cried, "I will lay my hand upon my mouth." Isaiah, I am sure, had a good opinion

of himself. He was a man of the city and apparently at home in kings' courts. But when in the Temple he saw that wonderful vision of Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips." Paul facing his critics did not hesitate to declare that he was not one whit behind the chiefest of the apostles; but Paul with the image of Christ before his eyes cried out, "I am the chief of sinners." But, as has been often said, Jesus, whether in the presence of God or man, never exhibited the slightest consciousness of sin, of any failure, any defect in Himself; never felt the slightest regret for anything He ever said or did. He called on others to repent, but never repented Himself. He taught others to seek forgiveness, but never sought forgiveness for Himself. "Who of you convicteth me of sin?" The world never conceived of such a man before. Even to His enemies this picture of One who walks with us as our kin, yet all the while shows that he is conscious of a closer kinship with the Father, is a hopeless mystery.

When I look through His life and find not one spot, one blemish, anywhere, I feel like crying out with the prophet John: "Look! The Lamb of God—the spotless sacrifice of God—that taketh away the sin of the world."

XI

THE GREATEST REASON OF ALL

I

I NOW come to what has long been to me the most satisfying reason of all for believing in Jesus. I have said that I believed in Him when I was a child because of what I saw, or thought I saw of Him in the lives of those in whom He lived, beginning with my mother. Later, I found another reason for believing in Him in what I learned of His life in the Gospels—that is, when I was no longer content to stop with analysing the story, but undertook to grasp it as a whole for the purpose of getting at His mind and spirit. I found a third reason in what I learned of His character in the Gospels by the same method, and a fourth in what I learned of His knowledge and wisdom by the same method. But I did not find the best reason of all until I came to a time when the exigencies of life practically forced me to cast my all upon Him as my only hope. When I made that venture I came into an experience with Him which enabled me to say:

I believe in Him because I know Him; because I have come to know the Lord and Saviour and

Life-giver and Guide of men as my Lord and Saviour and Life-giver and Guide.

The followers of Jesus, all the way from Paul to our fathers of a generation ago, were very frank. They did not hesitate to refer to themselves as living witnesses to the power of Christ to meet the needs of men. One naturally shrinks from this sort of thing in our day—an age which regards frankness about the body and everything that relates to the body as a sign of courage, and frankness about the experiences of the soul as a sign of weakness; but I doubt whether there has ever been a time since the days of Paul when frank testimony to the power of Christ was needed more than it is to-day. A woman of high culture said to me not long ago: “I am so glad you gave us that little glimpse of your personal experience. Do you know that that is what lay people—those of us who read—are needing to-day more than anything else? So many of us are all to pieces; we just don’t know where we are or what to believe, and our Christian leaders are so reticent nowadays, that we don’t know where they are. And we people who are in trouble need to know.”

In recent years practically the whole civilised world has fallen in with the scientific teaching that experiment (or experience, which is the same thing) is the basis of knowledge, and the first thing that people ask when we offer them something we

want them to believe, whether it be a scientific theory or a religion is, "Have you experimented with it?" or, "What has been your experience with it?" And they will no more accept a religion which you cannot back up with experience than they will accept a scientific theory which you cannot back up with experiment. There was a time when people listened to the preacher with exclamation points in their eyes. They said, "Isn't it wonderful!" But, to-day, they are listening to him with interrogation points in their eyes. They are saying: "Did you get that out of a book or do you know it of yourself?"

This is why I have not been satisfied to confine myself to what I have got out of a book. I realise that people have a right to know whether I am offering them second-hand knowledge or what I know of myself, and I am glad that I can meet this demand. I am glad that I can say, "I know whom I have believed."

I ask that you will not yield to the impulse to close your ears to this frank testimony because of its seeming immodesty or its uncanny sound. As for its immodesty, that does not trouble me now that I am living in the midst of a generation that is hardly in a position to cast the first stone; and as for its uncanniness, one need only remind oneself that the fact that a thing sounds uncanny does not necessarily mean anything more than that it is unfamiliar.

I watched a girl adding groups of figures and

announcing the results almost in an instant. She seemed positively uncanny. But she was not uncanny: she had been led by an exigency of life into a work which demanded rapid figuring, and she had only achieved what perhaps I might have achieved under similar circumstances. So when I say, as I have just said, that I know Jesus, it does not mean that I am in any sense unnatural; it only means that I have been led by the exigencies of life into a position in which my spiritual vision has had a chance to develop. It would have been strange if that girl, in the position into which she had been thrown, had failed to develop a vision for figures that was beyond my own; it would have been just as strange, if I, in the position into which I was thrown, had failed to develop a spiritual vision that was beyond hers. As I look back over the unusual experiences of my life I cannot see how any man whose mind and heart were open toward Christ—who had the will to believe—could have gone through them without reaching the point where he could say, as I say to-day: “I know Him.”

Conscious as I am of Him and of what He has done for me, I do not feel that I would be true either to Him or to myself if I should close this book without giving at least a brief testimony to His power to provide for the deepest needs of men.

What are the deepest needs of men?

II

Let us imagine that you and I are sitting alone in a quiet place watching a beautiful sunset. Beautiful sunsets awaken tender memories, memories of loved ones gone before, and these memories awaken thoughts of God, and when we begin to think of God we begin to think of ourselves, our blunders and our failures; and you and I have been thinking until our hearts have begun to ache, and now we have begun to talk just to relieve the ache.

You say to me: "Out in the hurly-burly of life I feel that I am literally overwhelmed with problems, but in a quiet place like this I am conscious that after all I have but one problem. I haven't life enough to live; that's my trouble. I am not strong enough for my job. I have enough physical strength, enough mental strength, perhaps, but I have no vital force in my spirit; I am not strong enough to do the things I know I ought to do, to speak the word I ought to speak, to endure the things I ought to endure, to overcome the things I ought to overcome. What can I do?"

And I begin to tell you of some men and women I happen to know who are strong enough for their job; not people of unusual talents or advantages, but just plain, everyday people, who do not differ from the rest of us except in one thing. They have a secret. And you ask me for their secret.

And I say to you: "Do you remember that wonderful man who was here some months ago? Do you remember what you said to me about him? You said that you would give anything in the world if your boy could have the privilege of living in intimate touch with such a wonderful character. What does that mean? It means that you feel that the secret of life is more life; that what your boy needs is enough vital force in his spirit to enable him to do the job God has given him to do in the world, and that the best way for him to get it is to get in intimate comradeship with someone who has an abundance of the vital force he needs. And you are right. If you will look over this community you will find that there are just two kinds of people in it; those who are strong enough to do the things they ought to do and those who are not. And if you will look into the lives of those who are strong enough for their job you will find that not one of them is doing his work by his own strength alone. Here is the secret of the strong. And here is the answer of Jesus to your question.

" 'I know what you need,' He says to us. 'You need life. You have enough life in your body and mind, but you have no life in your spirit. I came that you might have life. Now come to me and let me connect you up with the great Source of Life—your Heavenly Father. You ask, where is the Father? You cannot see Him; but come to me. I am in the Father and the Father in me. If

you will fall in with me you will fall in with Him. If you will put yourself in my hands you will be in His hands. If you do my will you will do His will. If you keep your whole being open to me, it will be open to Him; and just as the branch which lives in vital union with the vine, keeping its pores open to the vine, receives from the vine the life that it needs to bear fruit—to do its job in the world,—so you will receive your life from me—from the Supreme Source of Life in Me—and thus will be able to bear fruit—to do your job in the world. For apart from me ye can do nothing.’ ”

III

If you should speak of this teaching of Jesus to a man who is doing his thinking about religion in a materialistic atmosphere, he will probably tell you that it is all mystical nonsense; that mysticism is out of date, that what we need is a religion that will make this world fit to live in, and that every man who is a man is strong enough for his job, and can do his job, if he will only accept the moral teachings of Jesus and catch the inspiration of His example and go forward.

Of course mediæval mysticism—this queer thing that we associate with trances and visions—is out of date and we can well afford to do without it; but every man who responds to God, who is conscious of God, who in some degree lives in touch with God is a mystic in the true sense, and true

mysticism is the very essence of religion. As for the rest, it may be well to remind ourselves that with regard to Jesus we have to-day two offers and only two. Teachers who have lost their vision of the divine Christ in Jesus are offering us what they have left—a purely human Jesus who died nearly two thousand years ago, bequeathing to us vast treasures of wisdom and a perfect example. The Book offers us a human-divine Jesus, a living Christ in whom there is an inexhaustible supply of life and strength—everything that a man needs for his job,—and this Jesus, instead of simply offering us an example to follow, offers with His example a sufficient supply of strength to follow it. If we are going to choose Jesus at all we must fall in with one of these offers. There is no other. Which shall we choose? Is life, as we find it to-day, such an easy problem that we can safely plunge into it with nothing more than an example to follow? Shall we choose an example alone when we have a chance at that same example *plus* the life which he offers for our spirits—a divine life expressing itself in faith, love, courage, power—everything that we need to follow that example?

Jesus finds men standing alone, recognising no ties, except those of blood, insisting that they are their own and have the right to do as they please, regardless of God or man. It has never occurred to them that in that position they cannot do anything—that they are failing as completely as a star would fail if it should refuse to recognise the

ties which bind it to its orbit and go off to live its own life. What do these men need? Watch Jesus at His work. Here is a man who is drawn to him. Immediately Jesus seeks to make him His comrade. If the man will live in intimate touch with Him, keeping his mind and heart open to Him, he will come to know and love and obey Him, and thus will come to know and love and obey the Father that is in Him. And when, having come to know God as his Father, he turns to look into the faces of his fellow-men—God's other children—he will see that they are his brothers, and he will fall in with them as his brothers. Thus Jesus connects him up on the one side with God, the Supreme Source of Life, so that he can get the life—vital force, love, faith, courage, everything that he needs for his work in life—and then connects him up on the other side with his fellow-men so that he can use what he receives from the Supreme Source of supply in helping his brothers in accordance with God's will and plan.

This is the religion of Jesus, and question it as we may, it is the religion of the Gospels, the religion of Paul, of Augustine, of all the great leaders of the Church through the ages, all the men of great moral and spiritual power who have led in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of Christ, all the great missionaries of modern times, all the great leaders of our own time, such as Phillips Brooks and Dwight L. Moody and William Booth, each of whom had more spiritual power than a

hundred thousand ordinary men; and last, but by no means least, it has been the religion of all the high-type Christian mothers I have ever known or heard of.

We might as well face the truth: this world owes about all that it has in it that is eternally worth while to the mercy of God, and heroic Christian mothers, and a few men and women, most of whom learned mother's religion at mother's knee.

Why is it that a high-type Christian mother is the best there is? There are just two reasons. In the first place, if a mother does her duty her life is a living sacrifice, and that is the life which Jesus lived. After all, what is mother but a beautiful bundle of loving sacrifice?

In the second place a mother's heart-burdens are so heavy that they almost drive her into comradeship with Christ. She must go to Him or her heart will break. Mother gets the house quiet and sits down to put the baby to sleep in the old-fashioned way. Presently she looks down into the little face in the stillness and her heart begins to ache. She is thinking of that little fellow's future. She picks up a little hand and fondles it and something sends a dagger through her heart. She has caught a vision of the hard work that little hand has got to do. She picks up a little foot, fondles it, and again a dagger pierces her heart. She has caught a vision of the steep, stony path those little feet have got to tread. At such a moment what can a mother do? To whom can she

go? And so her heart cries out to her only Help; and thus she finds her way into that comradeship which makes her life of loving sacrifice the most beautiful thing in the world.

IV

Let me see if I can give you the religion of Jesus in a picture.

Let us imagine that you and I are taking a walk out in the mountains on a warm summer afternoon. A few moments ago we came into a cool, shady cove, and now we have come upon a beautiful spring beneath a great, overhanging rock. And now we are sitting by it looking down into its limpid depths.

Isn't it beautiful? So pure, so sweet, so calm, so unselfish; always giving, never asking anything in return. What is the secret of this beautiful thing? Why, its heart is open to an unseen fountain, and every moment it is receiving new supplies of pure, fresh, living water. Every drop of it is life, life, life. And because it is ever keeping its heart open to this unseen fountain it is overflowing in a little stream of service for the world. A tiny stream it is at first, but as it goes on it grows and grows and grows. Presently it pauses and forms a little pool to give a thirsty child drink. It goes on its way and now it pauses to form a pool to cool a man's fevered brow. A little further on it pauses to form a pool to wash

the blood from the wounds of a poor fellow way-laid along the road. Again it pauses to form a pool to bathe the temples of some weary woman fainting under the heat and burden of the day. And now it disappears in a brave venture down a deep, dark gorge. It looks like a desperate venture and we fear it is lost. But listen! From far down the mountain side comes the swish and drone of a little wheel that turns a little mill, that grinds a little corn to feed a hungry world.

Here is the life we call the religion of Jesus. Not a fountain of life and love alone, not a stream of service alone, but a fountain of life from which flows a stream of service.

Here I am, trying to keep my heart open to Him, the Unseen Fountain of Life, the source of all the life and strength and courage and faith and love I need. And because I am keeping my heart open to Him, He is sharing His life with me; and because His life is unceasingly flowing into my heart, my heart is overflowing in a little stream of loving service for Him and for my fellow-men. And so it happens that I am able to pause here and there to give a thirsty child drink. I pause again to cool a hard-driven man's fevered brow. I pause again to wash the blood from the wounds of some poor fellow waylaid along the road. I pause again to bathe the temples of some weary woman, fainting under the burden and heat of the day. Oh, it is a little stream, and my heart often aches because it is so small, but now and then as I go on

my way something moves me to make a venture for Him and I plunge down some deep, dark gorge not knowing where I am going, and here and there I find that He has given me the strength to turn a little wheel, that turns a little mill, that grinds a little corn to feed a hungry world.

Here is the deepest need of man—life. And this need Jesus alone attempts to meet. And He meets it.

v

Painful as it is to speak so intimately of oneself, I feel that I ought to bear personal testimony to the truth of this teaching. Jesus has met my own deepest need; He has given me life. Since the day I cast my all upon Him as my Life-giver, I have had a supply of vital force for my spirit that has been sufficient to meet the demands of my job in life in spite of handicaps which up to that time had made the passing years an almost unbroken record of fruitless struggle. One will ask whether this might not be a mere matter of imagination. The answer is simple. In the midst of a serious illness you found yourself saying, "I have no life; I am barely existing." How did you know? Because you had no strength. Was that a matter of imagination? That could be easily settled. You tried to get out of bed. That settled it. Gradually you grew better, and one day you were able to walk. A few days later you were saying to yourself, "Now I have life." How did

you know? Because you had some strength. You no longer fell down a dozen times a day.

In the same way I know that this experience of mine is not a mere matter of imagination. There was a time when I had no life in my spirit and I knew it. I knew it because I had no strength. I knew I had no strength because I fell down on my job a dozen times a day. A severe illness in early childhood deprived me of my vital force and left me physically utterly unequipped for life. I dragged my way through youth to manhood with a heart that was ever threatening to stop and a nervous system hopelessly out of gear. I thought that my one need was physical life. I was sure that if I had half the physical force of other men I could do something. But I did not have it, and there was no hope of getting it. By and by, I began to notice that some people I knew who were physical giants were doing nothing at all, and that some of the most useful men and women I knew—people of great moral or spiritual strength—had so little physical force that one wondered how they managed to keep going. By and by, I discovered that it was not their little physical vitality that was carrying them along, but their great spiritual vitality. They had enough strength in their spirits to go forward and do their work for Christ and humanity and pull their poor feeble bodies along with them.

I need not tell the rest of the story. To-day, I have life in my spirit, and I know it. There is

no immodesty in saying it, for I am conscious every day that it is not my own, that I do not deserve a particle of credit for it. Left to myself I could do nothing. I am conscious that "I live," but I also have a consciousness that makes me hasten to add, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." No, I am not comparing myself with Paul; I am only saying what millions of men and women since Paul's day have been able to say. How do I know that I have life in my spirit? Because I have some strength. I no longer fall down on my job a dozen times a day. Oh, yes, I fail—fail miserably; but I don't lose much time over it; there is something that enables me to rise to my feet and press forward again. And so long as I am conscious of Christ's life in me I know that however often I may fail I shall not be a failure.

And life is so different; so fundamentally different.

Realising all this as I do, I can no more think of Jesus as a mere human than I can think of the Father as mere shadow. Nor can I see anything to fear in the efforts which men who do not know Him are making to bring Him down to a purely human level. I have no more fear that anything can happen to Him than I have that a baby's breath can blow out an evening star.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord. Here I take my stand, and on this rock I rest my hope and risk my all, now and forevermore. So help me, Lord Jesus.

XII

HOW CAN WE PRESERVE OUR SENSE OF THE REALITY OF JESUS

I

IT will be noticed that I have not laid any great emphasis upon the sacrificial death of Jesus, and that I have not referred to His resurrection at all. Of course this would be unpardonable in a book designed to convince unbelievers, but this discussion is intended to meet what I have conceived to be a peculiar need of the average Christian, and I feel that I shall be more likely to achieve my purpose if I omit any extended reference to these two supreme evidences of His deity or divinity. I do not think it possible to over-emphasise either of these events; but in recent years we have laid so much stress upon the human in Jesus and so little upon the divine, that many people have come to think of His life as purely human, and to rest what faith they have in His divinity wholly upon His sacrificial death and resurrection. As a consequence when they venture into the sphere of controversy, where these two great events are being subjected to a treatment that is as confusing as it is merciless, their faith is in danger of collapse. For this reason, it

seems to me, there is need just now for a new emphasis upon the divine in the life and character and teachings of Jesus that will help Christians to realise that the atmosphere of the divinity of Jesus pervades the whole story of His career, and that He was as truly divine in His life as he was in His sacrificial death and in His resurrection.

Or, to put it a little differently, now that we are passing through a trial of faith which in some respects is as great as any of the trials that have overtaken the Church in the past, it is important that we should get such an impression of the divine in His life and character that when we come to the Cross and the Resurrection we shall need no proof of either, because we would feel that they were just what such a life and character called for. One may say that it is impossible to see the divine in the life of Jesus but for the light which the Cross and the open tomb cast back upon it, and that may be true; but it is not the light that makes His life divine; it only reveals it as divine.

Before I realised this truth I was easily troubled by the questions which were being raised by critics over the doctrines of the Cross and the Resurrection. To-day, I am looking at Jesus from another point of view and I can face these questions without dismay. I say to the man who is troubled just here: "Very well, drop the matter for the present. Sometimes when we cannot get at the truth from one side it is a good plan to try the other way round. What you need just now is to realise that

Jesus Christ is the Son of God; if you cannot see His divinity in His cross or His resurrection, go back and look for it in His life. Simply adopt these two great teachings as working theories; just assume that they are true, and then look at the life and character and teachings of Jesus in the light which they shed upon it. If you will do this, and read the story solely to get at and saturate yourself with the mind and spirit of Jesus, sooner or later you will become conscious that you are looking upon One who is not only human but above human, and when you come to the end of His earthly life and look upon the Cross and the Resurrection, you will cease to think of them as working theories or assumptions; you will see His divinity in them as plainly as you have seen it in His life."

I hope I shall not be misunderstood. I am not here saying that one can believe in Jesus as the Son of God without believing in His sacrificial death and resurrection. I am only suggesting to those who have not succeeded in reaching a satisfying faith on these two points that they might try the other way round. Speaking for myself, I cannot understand how anyone can conceive of Jesus as the Son of God apart from these two supreme events. When I leave out the Cross, His life, so far as I can see, is meaningless. When I let the Cross stay and leave out the Resurrection He is a hopeless mystery. But I judge no man. I only mean to say that as for myself I prefer to

stand in the light that shines from the face of the risen Christ. For I have found that in that light the mystery vanishes.

II

As I approach the end of my task I find myself facing a very practical question—to my mind the most pressing question of our time. What can the modern Christian do to restore and preserve his sense of the reality of Jesus? We are, today, literally overwhelmed with problems which await the solution of this problem. The very existence of our religion as a religion of power, so far as we are concerned, is depending upon it.

We are still asking in a pathetic way: "What is the matter with us? Why is it that so many Christians are falling down on their job? Why have they no life, no passion, no courage, no power to do the things they know they ought to do?"

If you will question people of this sort you will find that however widely they may differ in their religious experiences they are all alike in one respect: they have all lost their sense of the reality of Jesus. And if you will question the few men and women you know who are strong enough for their job—the people who are doing practically all the work of the world that is eternally worth while—you will find that whatever else they may have, all of them have a sense of the reality of Jesus.

If you will go over the reasons I have given for

believing in Jesus, you will find that not one of them is a reason that would appeal to us in the laboratory or the marketplace. I know of no reason for believing in anything that is of the spirit that appeals very strongly to us in either place. Certainly all the reasons we have for believing in the divine in Jesus are bound up in, or in some degree dependent upon, that something in us by which we feel that which we cannot see—that sense which enables us to realise and explore the realm of reality which is beyond both our physical and intellectual vision.

The sense of the unseen is to-day struggling for its very existence. The programme of daily life that has been pressed upon us by our modern civilisation allows absolutely no room for it, and it is utterly inimical to it. The only people we know whose sense of the realities of the unseen is sufficiently strong to be really worth while in life are those who have had the courage to adopt for themselves a programme that gives it a chance.

If I may judge from my own experience and from my observation of the lives of those who have opened their minds to me on this point, I can see no chance for the restoration or preservation of our sense of the reality of Jesus in the midst of our present civilisation unless we awaken to the necessity of adopting a daily programme that will enable us every day, if not several times a day, to pull ourselves out of this blinding maelstrom of material activities and pleasures, in

which the present generation spends about all the time that is not spent in sleep, and seek a quiet spot where we can bring our spiritual vision to bear upon Him. I am aware that to many people this also sounds like "mystical nonsense," but that does not alter the facts. If the religious history of the race has established anything at all, it is the fact that all men and women of great moral or spiritual power have had a sense of the reality of God, and that they preserved their God-consciousness by frequently communing with Him in the quiet places of life. And if you will look around you, you will find that this is just as true of the strong men and women of our own day. Wherever you find power you find a consciousness of Christ, and wherever you find a consciousness of Christ you find a faithful observance of the quiet hour.

I have known but two or three seeming exceptions to this rule, and they proved to be only seeming. I have in mind at this moment a strong Christian character—a woman of heroic spirit, whose family was so large and whose home was so small that it was impossible for her to find a quiet spot anywhere. But her burdens became so heavy that she felt that she could not live without a consciousness of Christ, and by persistent effort she acquired the art of closing her eyes and ears in the midst of the noise and confusion of her crowded home, and fixing her mind for a few moments upon Him, and thus she secured prac-

tically the same conditions which she would have had in a quiet room.

III

I am aware that we are living in a very practical age, and that there are good people who look upon this matter from what they call a practical point of view. They accept the fact of comradeship with Christ, but they insist that it is a spiritual luxury—something quite beyond the reach of the average man—and insist that we should be content with the more practical task of getting people to follow Jesus simply as their example. That, they assure us, will meet their practical everyday needs, and that is the best we can hope for.

But this suggestion includes a very large *if* as well as an exaggerated idea of the value of example. It is as easy to glorify good example as it is to glorify one's mother; but in real life a good example is very much like good advice; its value depends upon one's willingness and ability to follow it. There are good examples all around that incorrigible boy across the street, but thus far they have had no more effect upon him than the good advice which we have showered upon him. People are talking about the wonderful change that has come over John since he married Mary. Mary is the finest Christian character in town, and her example, they are saying, has just

about made that rascal over. But John's brother Jim married just as good a girl, and he is the same scoundrel to-day that he was the day he married her. Plainly it takes something more than example.

Both John and Jim had the advantage of good example. But John had something which made the example available and Jim did not. Jim married Margaret according to law, but there was no real union. Their spirits did not knit together. Jim did not even know that Margaret had a spirit. He did not give himself a chance to find out. A man never knows his wife's spirit until he takes the time to sit by her side in the still moments of the day, and thus give their spirits a chance to come in touch with each other. Then they become really acquainted; then they become real comrades, and as comrades each begins to share the best that is in the other. Then the good example of each becomes available to the other.

That was what happened in the case of John and Mary. They became real comrades, and in their comradeship he received from her spirit that which made it possible for her example to be of benefit to him. This did not happen in the case of Jim and Margaret, and so Margaret's good example to-day means nothing more to Jim than her good advice. Her example falls upon blind eyes, just as her advice falls upon deaf ears.

The same is true in our spiritual life. Whatever may be the value of example it can never

take the place of comradeship. Nor can anything else.

The religion of Jesus had its start in comradeship. The first thing Jesus did when He called a man to share in the work of building up His Kingdom among men was to make him a comrade. The work that was to be done required men of His own mind and spirit, and He planned that they should get His mind and spirit through comradeship with Him. And so when He called those humble fishermen of Galilee He told them that they were not to go back to their business, but must stay with Him. He had a more important business for them than fishing for fish. He wanted to make them fishers of men. Thus He drew around Him a little group of friends, and for three years they enjoyed all the privileges of comradeship with Him. They shared the riches of His mind; they learned His will and learned to fall in with it; they shared the riches of His spirit. Thus they gradually entered into the experience of sharing His very life—the vital force of His spirit—His love, His faith, His courage, His passion, even something of His power.

All through His life Jesus made use of the power of comradeship in extending His work. When His disciples had learned enough to go out and try to do a little work for His Kingdom, He was careful to see that no one went alone. They must go out two by two, that each might have the benefit of comradeship with the other. And when

the time came for Him to end His earthly career, His one concern was that they should not be left alone. They must not separate and go to their homes. They must go back to Jerusalem and live together as comrades, one in mind and heart and interest and wait until He should return in the person of the Holy Spirit. Then they would enter into a comradeship with Him that would never end. In that comradeship they would receive all that they needed to go out and do the work He had given them to do in the world.

We must not forget that the first Church was simply a little group of followers of Jesus who loved Him and who loved one another, and that their work, which soon began to change the world, began because of what they received while they lived in comradeship with Him and with one another.

IV

In recent years the necessity of comradeship in the life of the world has been brought home to us in a heartbreaking way. We had been saying for years that the tragedy that was overtaking our modern homes was immorality. But, in recent years, we have come to see that for every home that has been wrecked by marital unfaithfulness, there are a dozen that have gone to pieces for no other reason than that husband and wife became strangers to each other. It is useless to mince matters; our divorce evil is increasing to-day

mainly because the ever-increasing demands of our modern material civilisation upon our time are steadily driving a wedge between husbands and wives all over our land, and they are becoming strangers to each other.

When John and Mary marry, their love is everything to them, and they allow no material demands to get in its way. Every evening, when the day's work is over and the house is quiet, they seek a quiet place for a little while of spiritual comradeship. If there is an old-fashioned fireplace in the house, there they go and there they sit, four feet on the fender. And all the while they are sitting together in the stillness their spirits are knitting closer and closer together. And so long as they keep up that four-feet-on-the-fender habit, all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot pull John and Mary apart. But every day these ever-increasing demands on our social and business life are becoming more and more insistent, and in an evil hour they begin to yield to them, and one morning at breakfast Mary reminds John—and there are tears in her voice—that they have not sat together in the twilight for a month. A month later she repeats it, but there are no longer any tears in her voice. A few weeks later she happens upon a sentimental friend downtown who wants to know if she is keeping up her four-feet-on-the-fender habit, and Mary turns up her pretty little nose and exclaims, "Oh, mush!" And then we know that John and Mary have become

strangers each to the other. And how often that, and that alone, is the beginning of the end! First strangers, then misquotations, misinterpretations, misrepresentations, suspicions, daggers—dagger-looks, dagger-thrusts—hate, hate, more hate—hell!

To-day this terrible tragedy, which is repeated many thousands of times a year in our home life, is repeated just as often in our religious life. Only it is a one-sided misunderstanding. Everywhere one goes one meets professing Christians who misinterpret and misunderstand and talk bitterly of God, just as alienated husbands and wives misinterpret and misunderstand and talk bitterly of each other—and for the same reason. They started out to live a life of love through service *plus* comradeship, and in an evil hour they allowed their business or social or domestic demands to cheat them out of the time they were devoting to comradeship.

Jesus is nowhere more explicit than He is just here. He tells us plainly that this life of love which we call religion comes from Him; that it is His own life in us, and that the only way to get it is through vital contact with Him. We must be one with Him, and if we would be one with Him we must live on and by what we may receive from Him. And this means that we must live with Him. As a devoted daughter lives in such intimate comradeship with her mother that she lives on her—feeds upon the riches of her mother's

mind, the riches of her heart; sits with her in the gathering twilight and drinks in her spirit—her love, her gentleness, her faith—all the ineffably beautiful things that go to make a mother the best there is—so we must live with Christ. “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood”—except ye get your very life from Him—“ye have not life in yourselves.” Or to use His more familiar figure, unless we abide in Him as the branch abides in the vine—unless we fall in with Him, open our whole being to Him—our minds, our hearts, everything—so that His life can run through us as the lifegiving sap of the vine runs through the branch, we are practically dead; for apart from Him we can bear no fruit; we can do nothing.

There is no other way. We cannot live His life unless we abide in Him, and we cannot abide in Him unless we keep in vital touch with Him, not only through service, but through comradeship. It is in the quiet hour of spiritual comradeship—comradeship through prayer and meditation and the reading of His Word—when our minds and hearts, no longer choked up with the blinding, deafening, absorbing materialities of life can open wide to Him, that we feed upon the riches of His mind and heart and drink in His spirit; and “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him.” Moreover, it is only by thus keeping in vital contact with Him that we can receive that which we need to pour out in a

stream of loving service, thus making possible a life of service that is really worth while. We are often told that service will take the place of comradeship; but it is in comradeship that we get that which enables us to serve.

V

Let me say, in conclusion, that it is only when we have a sense of the reality of Jesus that we are able to realise how satisfying He is. And this, after all, is the important thing.

In a Christmas greeting which I wrote a year ago, I said that the heart-hunger of the world to-day is not for a reasonable religion, as some would have us believe, but for a satisfying God. And as our fathers used to say, only a God who has something in common with us can satisfy us. A God *and* Jesus may appeal to our minds, but only a God *in* Jesus can satisfy our hearts. We have tried both, and we know. Men may as well give up this modern notion that though Jesus be stripped of His deity the world will go on following Him as before. The world will not do it. It may admire Him as before, but there is not enough power on earth to persuade a heartsick humanity to cry out to a merely human Jesus, as my heart cries daily to my divine Lord, "O Life, O Love, O Joy, O Hope, I rest my soul upon Thee."

Let us hold on to our divine Master. We had toc hard a time trying to find a God who would

satisfy us to give Him up now. For ages and ages we searched for Him. We sought Him in the stars, and in the flowers, in the winds and in the seas, and in the far-off mountains. We scoured the deserts looking for His footprints. We honey-combed the earth seeking traces of His handiwork. And at last, one day, in the midst of our search, He suddenly revealed Himself unto us. For Jesus of Nazareth was God's supreme effort to make Himself known to men. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." I believe this with all my soul. When we looked at the stars we thought we saw the wisdom of God. When we looked at the mountains, we thought we saw the strength of God. When we looked at the flowers and the deep blue sky, and the golden sunshine, and at some beautiful mother bending over her new-born babe, we thought we saw the love of God. But when we looked upon Jesus we saw something in His face that said, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." And our hearts were satisfied.

The best thing we ever say to one we love best is that he is so satisfying. We never get beyond that. The older I grow the more I think of Jesus as the One who is so satisfying. I have known Him for a long while; and I am satisfied. I have tested Him in every exigency of life; and I am satisfied. I love Him as I could not love any human being; and I am satisfied. He has all there is of me; and I am satisfied.

How I wish I could find a word that would express just how I feel towards Him! Perhaps I can come nearer expressing it in a picture. Not long ago I asked myself: "If you were talking to an audience about Jesus, and knew that you had but one moment more to live, and heaven should give you the power to use that moment as you wished, what would you do?"

And my heart answered: "I should draw the whole human race together before me, and then—if I had the courage—I should ask Him to come and stand near me. And while every human eye was fixed upon Him, I should—

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

"Wherefore God also highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!"

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